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A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews

edited by
Amy-Jill Levine
with Maria Mayo Robbins

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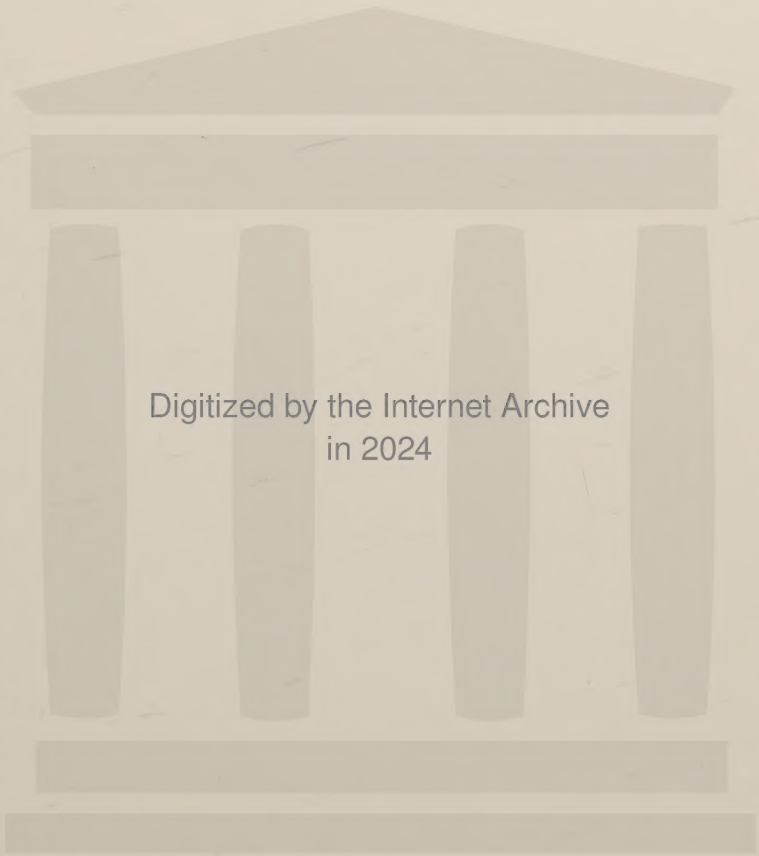
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A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews

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the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews

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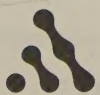

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PREFACE

A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews, along with its sister volumes on the other documents of the New Testament and early Christian literature, signals the extent to which feminist critique has become a core element of biblical, historical and theological study.

Letters of invitation to contribute to this series went well beyond scholars known from their contributions to explicitly feminist or women-identified collections, such as the two volumes of *Searching the Scriptures*[1] and the *Women's Bible Commentary*,[2] or from books and articles with 'feminist' in the title. Authors already established as having feminist interests were asked to suggest additional voices, and so interpreters at the beginning of their academic careers joined their senior colleagues in the pages of the volumes.

Invitations went beyond North America and Western Europe. Along with an intentional focus on cultural diversity, we targeted as well authors who might speak explicitly from two perspectives sometimes overlooked even in feminist biblical collections, namely, sexual identity (e.g., lesbian critique) and religious tradition (e.g., Evangelicals, Jews). Some chose to write explicitly from their social location, and some did not. For either new or previously published work not in English, Vanderbilt Divinity School/The Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality provided funds for translation.

Not all those invited were able to contribute, but readers should be able to hear echoed in the footnotes – and by extension in the sources those notes utilize – numerous and diverse feminist voices speaking in other volumes and venues.

In addition to publishing select 'classics' in feminist analysis, the series invited numerous senior scholars to reconsider their earlier approaches and conclusions. Through their revisions, changes in feminist thought can be tracked. The series also sought contributions from biblical experts not known for feminist interests or even, in some cases, sympathies: 'Write a "feminist" piece', we exhorted; when a few demurred ('I don't "do" feminist critique'; 'I don't know what feminist critique is'), we responded: 'You should find out about it; you should engage it; if you don't like it, explain why, for all disciplines can profit from engaged critique; if you do find it helpful, use it.'

We wish to thank Dr. Marianne Blickenstaff for her splendid editorial work on the earlier volumes in this series. We also wish to thank the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality at the Vanderbilt Divinity School for financial and technical support.

Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins
Vanderbilt Divinity School and Graduate Department of Religion

1 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction and Commentary* (2 vols.; New York: Crossroad, 1993, 1994).

2 Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992; rev. edn, 1998).

Acknowledgments

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ANET	James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950)
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
ANRW	Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–)
BAGD	Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. William Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn, 1979)
BDAG	Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt and F. William Gingrich, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
BeO	*Bibbia e Oriente*
Bib	*Biblica*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BU	Biblische Untersuchungen
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
EKKNT	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
HNTC	Harper's NT Commentaries
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IBC	Interpretation Bible Commentary
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament,* Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament,* Supplement Series
JSQ	*Jewish Studies Quarterly*
KEK	H.A.W. Meyer (ed.), Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament

KJV	King James Version
LD	Lectio divina
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	*Novum Testamentum*, Supplement Series
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTT	*Nieuw theologisch Tijdschrift*
REB	Revised English Bible
RSR	*Religious Studies Review*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SB	Sources bibliques
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLCP	SBL Centennial Publications
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS	SBL Monograph Series
SCHNT	Studia ad corpus hellenisticum Novi Testamenti
SE	*Studia Evangelica I, II, III* (= TU 73 [1959], 87 [1964], 88 [1964], etc.)
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
ST	*Studia theologica*
Str-B	Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (7 vols.; Munich: Beck, 1922–61)
TDNT	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–)
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

List of Contributors

James W. Aageson, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, USA
Judith K. Applegate, Seattle, WA, USA
Betsy J. Bauman-Martin, University of California at Riverside, Riverside, CA, USA
Timothy B. Cargal, The Ecumenical Institute of Theology, St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore, MD, USA
Warren Carter, Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, MO, USA
Pamela Eisenbaum, Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO, USA
Ruth Hoppin, Daly City, CA, USA
Luke Timothy Johnson, Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Atlanta, USA
Catherine Clark Kroeger, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA, USA
Magda Misset-van de Weg, Katholieke Theologische Universiteit, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Introduction

Amy-Jill Levine

The so-called 'Catholic Epistles' and the Epistle to the Hebrews prompt the same feminist concerns addressed to other early Christian texts: questions of translation, social roles, gender constructions, sites of power, politics and ethics, women's roles, feminine imagery, sexuality, freedom and constraint, family values.... But these volumes – 1, 2 Peter; James; Jude; 1, 2, 3 John – as well as Hebrews have not drawn the attention, either in terms of exegesis in general or feminist interpretation in particular, accorded to the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline Epistles and the Apocalypse of John. The documents are considered to be less important for ecclesial and theological development than their canonical predecessors, and the shorter length of some (Jude, 3 John) suggests that size does matter when it comes to scholarly attention. The specific exhortations offered in the Petrine Epistles and Hebrews' culturally embedded language of sacrifice create distance between text and today's reader. Even pericopae demanding feminist analysis – the *Haustafel* (household code) in 1 Peter, gendered language in James, the 'elect lady' in the Johannine Epistles, references to such figures as Sarah and Rahab – lack due attention.

The ten essays in this volume begin to correct such dearth through revisiting consensus views on history and hermeneutics as well as through new approaches and new interpretations. Some essays seek to recuperate texts; others proclaim them 'texts of terror' and insist on recontextualizing or reading 'against the grain'. Some begin with a strong but implicit presumption of biblical authority; others adopt a purely secular stance. The contributors disagree among each other as to what the texts say and how they should be understood.

Whereas the issues raised have and will continue to occupy feminist readers, not every contributor adopts an explicitly 'feminist' perspective, and those who claim this perspective define their feminisms individually. As part of a 'companion' series, this volume not only offers commentary from within feminist perspectives, it also encourages feminist readers to react to those who would not claim the label, for it solicits senior scholars who do not identify as 'feminist' to interact with feminist concerns broadly defined. If in the process they become 'feminists', good; if they decide to use a feminist collection in their classroom, so much the better; at the very least they provide views feminists would do well to consider.

The first several contributions, in diverse ways and drawing diverse conclusions, focus on 1 Peter. Warren Carter revisits the cultural role of Rome's imperial cult and argues that the epistle offers the means for Christian participation in it, and James W. Aageson highlights reading strategies in light of the gospel proclaimed in the opening chapter. Magda Misset-van de Weg explores 1 Peter's depiction of an obedient Sarah and offers several responses based on how Sarah, in both Masoretic text and Septuagint, functions as a possible role model, and Betsy J. Bauman-Martin, in dialogue with feminist views on 1 Peter and on suffering, finds in 1 Peter's teaching of resistance to extra-ecclesial cultural pressure a complicated and possibly

more helpful response than previously recognized. Catherine Clark Kroeger's canonical focus finds a combination of valuable material in 1 Peter and counter-arguments to those who see it only as promoting abusive subordination, and, finally, Judith K. Applegate locates scholarship's ease in dismissing possibilities of female leadership roles and then offers a new understanding of the 'co-elect' (1 Pet. 5.13) in Babylon who sends greetings.

Warren Carter begins with the recognition that the specific exhortations to Christian wives (3.1–6) and slaves (2.18–25) appear in the company and context of civic interest: 1 Peter commands all hearers to submit to 'every human authority' (2.13) and to 'honor the emperor' (2.17). After probing in detail the question of Christian women's civic participation, Carter concludes with a new and potentially salutary reading of 1 Pet. 2.13, 17, verses traditionally seen as permitting readers to refuse participation in any act deemed incompatible with their new faith.

As Carter explains, one of Rome's most efficient mechanisms for maintaining power was the imperial cult. Public architecture, statues, festivals, processions, swearing oaths in the emperor's name, sacrifices, and games complemented domestic rites in impressing upon the population the emperor's authority and, sometimes, divinity. But public events required sponsors, and so elite members of society, individuals as well as voluntary societies, were expected to fund festivals, erect and maintain public buildings, buy sacerdotal office and contribute to sacrifices and otherwise both demonstrate loyalty to the emperor and provide others – the entire population – means for their own participatory demonstration. Lack of participation suggested atheism or treason. Contrary to the scholarly consensus, Carter argues that 1 Peter promotes such participation.

Demonstrating how endemic certain readings are, Carter's first argument is based not on the idealized presumption of complete Christian loyalty but on the actual words of the text: neither 1 Peter's commands to honor the emperor nor the exhortations to wives and slaves to submit include exceptive circumstances. The presumption that everyone knew exceptions were intended does not hold, since Christians were participating in the imperial cult (see 1 Corinthians 8–10; Acts 15; Revelation 2, 18; Pliny's *Letters*; Tertullian's *De Idololatria* ...). Nor, although an argument from silence, do any of 1 Peter's approximately 46 quotations and allusions to the Septuagint ever cite pronouncements against idolatry. Rather, honoring the emperor was precisely the sort of 'good conduct among the Gentiles' (2.13) 1 Peter advocates. Carter concludes, 'The advocacy of behaviors that will patently exhibit submission and conformity in well-understood cultural terms comprises the author's solution to the "problem" of considerable group–society tension caused not by conversion per se but by post-conversion practices of non-participation'.

In this scenario, faith protects the Christian from compromise. Peter secures the hearers' identity as 'God's people' whose hearts are inclined to God; following from this inclination, the language of submission becomes submission not to the emperor but to divine will (see 2.13–17). For women and slaves, submission to, respectively, husbands and masters holds a structural parallel to the exhortation to obey the emperor. Such submission then, in both public and private spheres, is divinely legitimated, for it is ultimately a submission to God. Carter adduces four points in support of this conclusion. First, he finds that the example of Sarah endorses submission, even sexual submission to Pharaoh and Abimelech of Gerar; moreover, as (albeit a

temporary) member of their households, she would have been expected to participate in their domestic rituals. Second, by participating in imperial rites, Christians could and did counter negative publicity. Third, philosophic convention recognized possible gaps between external obedience and inner commitment. Finally, Origen appears to have taken Peter's path by distinguishing 'true worship' from 'adoration'; the latter reflects social custom, such as adoring the emperor's image. Thus, for a Christian to believe one thing and participate in another was neither anomalous nor unfaithful.

Granting that the epistle's urging of submission has been and can be destructive, Carter nevertheless finds in 1 Peter some good news: the 'strategy of public, culturally defined submission and honoring while maintaining an internal commitment to Christ as Lord offers an alternative to passive compliance or increased suffering'. The text offers both a mechanism of survival and a means of protest. In these days of increasing nationalism and even jingoism in the US and sparks of nationalism and ethnocentrism across the globe, Christians and others who question governmental policy will find themselves in similar situations; some now do. Such individuals may well require coping strategies – for the sake of the church, or their own lives, or their communities, or their children. (I write this as the US Supreme Court is considering the case for removing 'under God' from the Pledge of Allegiance, a pledge schoolchildren are expected to recite, in ritualized fashion with their hands over their hearts; the US too has its state cult, and we are by no means alone.) 1 Peter presents a societal problem that transcends the years; his advice, interpreted in whatever way, may be found a text less of terror than of survival.

James W. Aageson addresses 1 Pet. 2.11–3.7 through the ethics of biblical interpretation, the problems of authority and what the reader owes the text. For Aageson, as for this volume's other contributors on 1 Peter, the text must be seen first in its own social context, and then interpreters must adjudicate conflicting claims that occur when the text is transported into a world of different values and expectations. The process is complicated, however, for we have neither surety on the original purpose of the letter (as Carter's argument demonstrates) nor a singular situation for readers today.

First Peter has been read as an accommodationist text promoting behavior motivated by external pressure; in this configuration, Christian honor is threatened when nonconformist behaviors of wives and slaves threaten to shame husbands and masters and, consequently, the church as well. The implied audience thus extends beyond *paterfamilias* and church to the external world. But this world is not the world of (most) Christians today: persecution is still rare especially in the West, and the individualism that characterizes post-Enlightenment thought tends to preclude much of the honor/shame model. Alternatively, 1 Peter has been read as offering consolation and encouragement to the 'visiting strangers' and 'resident aliens' persecuted for rejecting prevailing social and political expectations. The exhortations then have an internal disciplinary import; the audience is the church, and the suffering demarcates boundaries between it and the world. Again, transferral of this setting to the twenty-first century is difficult especially for the liberal church that does not begin with a dualistic social construct.

Acknowledging a text's cultural and historical embeddedness can prevent abusive interpretations, and the point holds for more than just the well-known problem of

universalizing a case-specific scenario. Texts without contexts easily serve as solipsistic pretexts. More insidious, as Aageson notes, 'oppressed people may internalize the words' pronounced by those in authority, including the authority of the Scriptures, and so confirm rather than fight their oppression. The suffering Christ promoted by 1 Peter, for example, can be a helpful model of 'the cost of discipleship' and a catalyst to 'great love and self-sacrifice'. Others may find the paradigm to smack of masochism or psychological ailments. Were there any doubt on the same text producing two opposing reactions, the contradictory responses to Mel Gibson's paean to Jesus' suffering in *The Passion of the Christ* proves the point.

Aageson breaks through the impasses created by debates on purpose and audience by understanding 1 Peter not (only) in terms of social setting but also in terms of literary arrangement. Like Carter, he begins not with 2.11–3.7, but with earlier comments, this time the presentation of the 'gospel' in 1.3–12. The opening section, addressing future inheritance, present trials and past revelation, shows that change in status occasioned by new religious attitudes creates a new behavior of genuine, mutual love. All the congregants are 'living stones', a 'holy priesthood', an 'elect race'. But there is nothing in either temporal configuration or new faith that mandates the exhortations to wives and slaves.

With 2.11, the communal focus on the church turns to consideration of the 'gentile' (2.12) world (the 'accommodationist' view): interior identity has external import. Therefore, 'Christians are to respect human authorities'. The exhortations to wives and slaves appear based on the cultural situation and not on the gospel message, or, in academic terms, 'the imperatives in 2.11–3.7 do not follow from the indicative character of the gospel alone, or perhaps even primarily, but also from some claim about the culture and what serves the interests of the church in that context'. Since the epistle proffers a strong eschatological view, the external situation is temporary and the internal, eternal. Conversely, when 1 Pet. 3.7 directs (Christian) husbands to honor their wives 'as fellow heirs of the grace of life', the counter-cultural – at least counter to the honor/shame system as Aageson sees it – point derives from the gospel's call to mutual love (1.22).

Aageson concludes that 'when the cultural situation shifts, a corresponding re-articulation of the gospel must follow if the message is to offer hope and not harm'. Some readers, however, will deem the context irrelevant: that exhortations to subordination appear not only in 1 Peter but are reinforced by other *Haustafeln* indicates that the role of wives and slaves is divinely designed and not prompted by persecution. Nor do all women who voluntarily – the issue is one of choice – accept a subordinate role in Christian marriage perceive themselves oppressed; some find a closer relationship to their Savior, and many are married to Christian men who honor and love them as Christ loves the church and as they honor their own bodies (Ephesians 5). Perhaps, however, even more conservative readers will agree with Aageson that 1 Peter does address an enduring problem, that of the relation of the Christian to the world. And, as Aageson prophetically concludes: 'It may be that the writer of 1 Peter failed to respond adequately to his own call, but our smugness at his failure may be tempered when we turn our own hand to this same problem [of being in the world but not of it].'

Magda Misset-van de Weg also finds 1 Peter responding both to external forces (the need to win favorable attention) and internal pressure (the need to re-establish

group cohesion). The needs require both practical detail and theological grounding; the former derives substantially from the *Haustafel*, the latter derives from 'established Jewish Scriptures and/or traditions' (on this, I add that the audience of this text may not be Jewish; the Scriptures cited are also the Scriptures of the Gentile church). Specifically, Misset-van de Weg finds in 1 Peter a 'message for women's ears': women are to be chaste, modest, gentle, obedient and above all submissive, just as 'Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord' (1 Pet. 3.1–6).

Once 1 Peter cites Sarah, additional intertextual connections appear. Like the matriarch and her husband, the Christians of 1 Peter are 'elect' and 'chosen', distance themselves from their former lives, are in a 'strange land' and are obedient to divine command. But 1 Peter retells Sarah's story to domesticate the matriarch, enhance the authority of the patriarch, and so conform to prevailing social custom.

Sarah of Genesis by no means epitomizes obedience, despite commentators' assertions. Only in Gen. 18.12 does she call Abraham 'lord'; the context is her internal laughter upon hearing that she and her aged husband will have a child: 'Not yet has this befallen me till now, but my lord is too old' (LXX). Rabbinical commentary does associate Genesis 18 with harmonious marital relationships, and Jewish as well as Gentile moralists did use examples of virtuous behavior to promote particular values. But even these examples reveal the strain of 1 Peter's citation of a very feisty and independent Sarah as paradigmatic of obedience. Misset-van de Weg sees in the Septuagint and so 1 Peter 'a conventional formula' albeit one in which Sarah does 'reflect proper respect for her husband'. In the Hebrew, however, Sarah inquires whether she is to 'have pleasure' (likely a reference to a sexual encounter) 'now that my husband is old'; the Septuagint makes Sarah more respectful or at least less physical, but given that Sarah laughs – and is faulted because of it – also suggests she was less than submissive and honoring.

According to Misset-van de Weg, Sarah is beautiful, strong, seizes initiative, and authoritative (twice Abraham listens to her [Gen. 16.2; 21.12]). At Mamre, then, her reference to 'lord' does not detract from her strength. Misset-van de Weg also wonders whether the Anatolian women 1 Peter addresses 'followed the example of Sarah, and laughed'. If they read Sarah's full story – her initiative, her recognition of Abraham's shortcomings, her strength – they may well laugh. But if they saw instead that the Septuagint strips out her sexual humor, that her obedience sanctions sexual servitude or that she is remembered only for her submission, they may find nothing humorous at all.

Betsy Bauman-Martin draws not only upon the historical context noted as well in the other contributions, she also engages contemporary Christian feminist readings. According to Bauman-Martin, 'mainstream Christian feminists have come to identify nearly all suffering as the result of oppression'. While the approach does correct patriarchal presumptions, Bauman-Martin finds that it ignores the millions of women who must live with suffering, universalizes the meaning of suffering and so prescribes responses that do not fit all circumstances, and remains disconnected from women's experiences. According to Bauman-Martin, mainstream feminist theologies refuse to accept suffering ever as redemptive; consistently, they find both the ideas of atonement and the concept of Jesus' (or God's) suffering as 'particularly damaging' for encouraging martyrdom and so women's victimization, masochism and passivity.

Seen as emphasizing agency and autonomy, however, 1 Peter need not be dismissed. For example, the text presumes that Christian slaves and women were participating in activities contrary to the dominant cultural ethos and were suffering for it. Slaves were refusing to submit sexually to their masters, and they suffered accordingly. The submission commended then is not to sexual exploitation but to punishment. Similarly, the appeal to Jesus does not justify self-sacrifice; instead, it attests the unjustness of Christian suffering. Slaves and wives do not in this reading suffer because of masochistic or self-sacrificial pathologies. Their suffering is not redemptive, but neither is it arbitrary; it is rather the result of moral choice.

Recognizing that her thesis could promote abuse, Bauman-Martin insists on the disjunction between the situation of women in Petrine circles and women today (e.g., those in abusive marriages): there are few examples today especially in the West of Christian persecution, and abused women do have resources. Nevertheless, when some feminists explain that suffering is against God's will, women today who cannot escape persecution experience not liberation but reinforcement of their own oppression. Nor should the image of the suffering Christ be rejected. To the contrary, argues Bauman-Martin, the suffering Christ validates the experiences of suffering women. While suffering cannot be justified, it is nevertheless a fact of life; while it is not redeeming, meaning can be found in it. Meaningful suffering would be that which leads to knowledge, whereas meaningless suffering leads to despair. Life, in its messiness, cannot be reduced to the either/or treatment of suffering; the text, in its complexity, cannot be reduced to the either/or of constraint or liberation.

Catherine Clark Kroeger's canonical-critical approach locates even in the language of wifely submission a liberationist message. Whereas 1 Pet. 3.1–6 has been read as repressively insisting that women endure domestic abuse in the hopes that they might convert their husbands, Kroeger argues that 'the passage addresses spousal abuse only to insist that husbands honor their wives as equals and that failure to do so will obstruct the abuser's prayer life'. She finds that other canonical calls for wifely submission (1 Cor. 7.3–5; Eph. 5.18–33; Col. 3.13–19; as well as 1 Pet. 2.16–3.8) are both constructed within a framework of mutuality and accompanied by directives to prevent spousal abuse (Eph. 5.28–29; Col. 3.19; 1 Pet. 3.7). Christ the bridegroom (Eph. 5.25–37), and so the husband who follows him, fosters the bride's potential, 'including the ability to make her own decisions' but – since not all husbands are Christ-like – women will, indeed must, sometimes disagree. Kroeger further insists that the church is divinely mandated to prevent abuse (Jer. 21.12; 22.3).

Supporting this argument about women's choices and responsibilities is a linguistic appeal. While ὑποτάσσω, the verb applied to wives (1 Pet. 3.1, 5; Eph. 5.22; Col. 3.18; Tit. 2.5), is often translated as 'submit yourselves' (literally 'place oneself under [another]'), Kroeger claims it cannot promote 'absolute obedience' to any other human. Absolute obedience belongs only to God and, further, individual conscience as such supersedes the commands of earthly leaders. Thus, the wife's submission 'was no more renunciation of one's own decision-making capacity or conscience than was the decree to be subject to governing authorities'. To the contrary, it was rebellious in seeking the conversion of the husband.

Kroeger, like Misset-van de Weg, recognizes the possible disjunct between Sarah's depictions in Genesis and 1 Peter, but she highlights Sarah's obedience. First

Peter uses not ὑποτάσσω but ὑπακούω – the same verb used to denote the believer's obedience to the Christ (1 Pet. 1.2, 14, 20, and see 2.8; 3.1, 20; 4.17) – to describe Sarah as 'submitting' to Abraham. But even here, Kroeger does not find a negative value; instead, she proposes that Sarah's 'outstanding obedience' had to do with the mutuality in her marriage and was demonstrated by her following Abraham into an unknown land for 'women find it particularly difficult to be uprooted and sever family ties' (then again, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, Ruth, etc. manifest little problem in leaving natal families, and not all women find the severing distressing). Conversely, Kroeger faults Abraham for his 'flagrant lack of faith' in risking his wife for the sake of self-preservation. Indeed, by complying with Abraham's request that she lie for him, Sarah herself becomes a vehicle of misfortune.

In Kroeger's reading, 1 Peter as well as the rest of the Scripture endorses not the dominance of one individual over another – Mt. 20.25–28 and Mk 10.42–45 speak directly to the evils of such domination – but mutuality and unity. For married couples, then, the biblical model is one of mutual submission, mutual responsibility and 'shared decision-making'. Some may argue that this sanguine conclusion neglects the concomitant advice to slaves, but with her specific focus on women in the canonical context, Kroeger provides a reading by which women who refuse to dismiss biblical texts as culturally specific can find recourses for preventing domination or abuse.

The final contribution on 1 Peter is Judith K. Applegate's challenge to the conclusion that 'the (feminine) in Babylon co-elect (feminine)' of 5.13 is an ecclesial group rather than a particular woman. In the history of interpretation, Applegate finds reluctance to acknowledge the presence of a woman in such a position of authority and respect; in presenting her own case, she recognizes the problems of an 'elect' woman's authorizing women's subordination.

The ecclesial reading of 1 Pet. 5.13 begins formally in the fourth century with Codex Sinaiticus, which adds the term ἐκκλησία ('church') before 'co-elect'. A few renderings offer a vague 'She who is at Babylon' or 'Your sister in Babylon' – expressions that could refer either to an individual or to a community – but the commentaries typically insist, 'No individual lady is meant'. Some claim the reference to the church is 'natural' – despite the facts that the New Testament does not normally designate churches as 'co-elect' but that it does contain greetings from individual women. Others, seeing Peter's 'co-elect' as a personification of the church, appeal to other personifications, such as Eph. 5.22–23, Revelation and 2 John. But as Applegate argues, Ephesians calls the church not 'bride' but Christ's 'body'; Revelation 19–22 identifies the lamb's marriage partner as either his wife/woman (γυνή) or bride (νύμφη), but the references are eschatological: John is not speaking of the present church. The appeal to 2 John creates a circular argument: if the Johannine 'elect lady' and 'her elect sister' are churches, so the argument goes, then 1 Peter 5 must refer to a church. But, as Applegate reminds us, Rom. 16.13 identifies a woman as 'elect', so reference to individual women would hardly have been unusual.

As Applegate demonstrates, nothing in 1 Peter indicates that the 'elect' refers to churches or congregations per se. Instead, the evidence points otherwise. For example, if 'elect' does refer to a church or congregation, then the masculine plural

'elect' in 1.1 and the feminine singular 'co-elect' in 5.13 become inexplicable: there are not 'boy' and 'girl' churches. If the terms refer to individuals the problem is resolved. Perhaps the co-elect woman was native to the area or closely identified with its congregations, as were Dorcas, Lydia and the various women mentioned in Romans, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 2 Timothy and, possibly, 2 and 3 John (the 'elect lady'). Perhaps 'co-elect' is a title like 'co-presbyter' (cf. 1 Pet. 5.1).

Applegate is astutely aware that locating an individual woman in 1 Peter's greeting is insufficient for feminist analysis: the next step is to determine the relationship between this woman, associated with the letter's author and so authority, and the *Haustafel*. Interpreters have at least two options. The 'co-elect' woman, like Sarah, may be seen as coopted into supporting subordination of wives, or – like Sarah – her authoritative position may function as an alternative or even corrective to the *Haustafel*.

Unlike 1 Peter, the Epistle of James does not directly address women (although there is a striking feminine vocative in 4.4) or women's issues. But as Timothy B. Cargal observes, 'For a paraenetic writing devoid of any sustained interest in addressing the ethics of human sexuality, the Letter of James places unusual emphasis on the language of sexual infidelity'. Interrogation of this material reveals, in Luke Timothy Johnson's words, a 'surprising witness' to gender constructions in the early church.

Johnson, inquiring whether James's 'casual androcentrism' includes women, offers a caution against leaping to inclusive language. Because James does provide joint reference to 'brother and sister' (2.15), one could legitimately argue that the gendered language is targeted to the men of the congregations. Further, the use of ἀνήρ as opposed to ἄνθρωπος resists an inclusive translation, and the connection of the epistle to Wisdom literature (a genre to which Cargal's study also appeals) appears to confirm an exclusive address. For Johnson, the debate over reference is, finally, 'quibbling': androcentric language is the norm. Whether it is advisable to preserve androcentric language in translation and exegesis today, and whether James's instructions apply to women either in his own social world, in ours or both remain open questions.

Johnson next addresses the three figures James presents as moral exemplars: Abraham the model of faith, Job the model of patient endurance, and Elijah the model of powerful prayer. Complicating the tradition-histories of the male exemplars is James's pairing of Abraham not with Sarah but with Rahab 'the whore' (πόρνη). In this reference, Johnson finds 'an inclusiveness of sorts', albeit one in which the woman receives 'neither the attention nor the explicit honor' of the men. What messages these exemplars convey to women remains yet another question. Abraham may demonstrate faith through works, but those works include placing his wife twice in sexual danger and expelling his other wife and child. Job's only comment to his wife – who has also lost home and family – is one of condemnation. The apparently unmarried Elijah commandeers the services, and food, of a poor widow and reserves his harshest critique not for the Israelite Ahab but for his Phoenician wife Jezebel. In other words, the men would not find places on a Feminist Biblical Interpretation heroes list.

Breaking with stereotypically androcentric language and exemplars, James does offer in Johnson's reading something 'unexpected': the 'males who dominate the action within the composition do not necessarily act according to gender stereo-

types'. The men addressed are characterized as 'friends of the world and enemies of God' (4.4) because of their (typically masculine) boasting, envy, competitiveness, wealth and even murderous behavior, and the male exemplars are praised for almsgiving, patient endurance, faith, meekness, service and even passivity. Johnson does not see these attributes as potential cooptations of the feminine. Finally, for the (upper-class) man to adopt roles traditionally associated with women and even become a slave (Bourdieu, 1977) may be both spiritually and psychologically healthy; a woman advised to do the same – when she has little option otherwise, as we see in 1 Peter – may find a less healthy result. Perhaps, then, the androcentric language is better retained.

Concerning James's explicit – and negative – use of female sexual imagery, Johnson finds no direct gender implications. To take the references as a cultural script is, in his view, to have a too-literal and limited appreciation for the function of language. While the epistle does use sexual imagery, it also employs *inter alia*, maritime and agricultural metaphors, and these resist literalizing. The address to 'adulteresses' thus has 'nothing to do with actual women': the language is conventional, and it functions as a reference to violent men (4.1–10). I suspect some feminist readers will disagree with Johnson's conclusion that James's sense of gender is 'fair and flexible': the address to adulteresses is conventional, but conventions can have social repercussions. Similarly, the birthing imagery applied to the father (marriage) can be taken as a positive reference to women's biological capabilities, a disruption of the masculine image of the deity, a cooptation of women's roles or simply a figure – albeit a striking one.

Johnson's contribution concludes with the arresting heading, 'The Egalitarian Perspective of James'. Comparing James's rhetoric to Wisdom literature, Johnson finds expected kinship language but a notable lack of both 'generational' references (e.g., 'father–son' terminology, which tends to privilege males') and the model of the 'household', the *oikos*, with its parent–child, husband–wife and master–slave relationships. By dedicated focus on the intentional community, the *ecclesia*, 'James entirely lacks the attention given to marriage in virtually all Wisdom literature, attention that serves to locate women within the household and in subordination to males'. Moreover, unlike other Wisdom literature – and unlike 1 Peter as well – James neither commends obedience to rulers nor stresses honor and shame. 'Women are not, for James, a "special problem". They are defined in terms of moral agency, worth and responsibility rather than by biology and (related) social roles.'

Perhaps these observations on the absence of household language can be extended. For example, might James be commending the virginal or celibate life? Job loses his children; Abraham is commanded to sacrifice his son; Elijah has no children but cares for the son of another; Rahab is not known for uxorious or maternal activities. Perhaps women in James's purview attained authority precisely because they were not restricted to household roles. But even with this plausibly liberating role, complications arise. What of women who lack the gift of celibacy, or who are pressured, even forced, into marriage, who are raped and become pregnant? Real life—then and now—precludes any final verdict on the epistle's effect rhetorically or paraenetically.

Timothy B. Cargal approaches James through the lens of intertextuality but avoids interpreting allusions in literary isolation. Instead of matching up single verses or

commenting on repeated terms, Cargal searches for a general thematic that offers multiple insights into the epistle. His proposal is to read James's language of infidelity and reference to Rahab in light of Wisdom literature's Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly.

Starting with tradition history, Cargal observes how Rahab is typically understood as epitomizing the faithful proselyte who demonstrates hospitality (Johnson notes – albeit cautiously – the 'hospitality' connection between Abraham and Rahab). Thus, she is paired with Abraham, a former Gentile who demonstrates his faith by 'work', that is, his willingness to sacrifice his son. But the parallels are inexact: why not parallel Rahab's hospitality to Joshua's spies with Abraham's hospitality to the three messengers? Why call attention to Rahab's profession if the theme is simply 'hospitality'? As Cargal notes, the connection of prostitute to hospitality serves merely to reinscribe the negative connotations of prostitution as a perverse form of hospitable behavior; worse, it creates a gendered and sexualized contrast to Abraham: not only the righteous male, *but even* a sinning female can be saved.

Cargal next notices that James modifies Rahab's story by adding that she 'sent them out by another road' or 'another way' (ὁδός, 2.25); ὁδός elsewhere in the letter indicates the way to salvation. Thus, Rahab, because of her own faith, sets the spies who symbolize a wandering generation on their proper path. For James, Rahab's importance rests in her faith, not in her hospitality. As such, Rahab represents Woman Wisdom 'justified by her works' (Jas. 2.25; see Mt. 11.19b and Lk. 7.35). Rahab calls the community out of the exile of adultery and death.

As long as sexual language functions metaphorically for religious concerns – the connection of adultery with apostasy or of intercourse with spiritual fulfillment – personal sexual fulfillment is at risk. Association of (physical) sex and the female (connected to the earth, the body, physicality, sensuality) as opposed to the male, who represents the mind, the spirit, control, etc., exacerbates the problem. While 'Rahab the prostitute' is a culturally established phrase, the designation perhaps best matching this description, 'Abraham the pimp' (who places his wife in foreign harems), remains, if not unthinkable, certainly not to be uttered in polite company. Even as the epistle's Rahab, paired with Abraham, represents faith and wisdom, the very pairing reinforces cultural presuppositions about women and sexuality both by what it makes explicit (Rahab's profession) and by what it masks (Abraham's own sexual activities).

This collection's final two essays indicate in both subject matter and approach the anomaly of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Just as Hebrews' unique combination of filial, sacerdotal, and sacrificial christologies as well as its frustrating anonymity requires special attention, so too feminist approaches take new forms. Eisenbaum approaches the christological question through analysis of the function of sacrifice in establishing and maintaining filial relationships; Hoppin argues that Priscilla – Paul's companion, Apollos's instructor and Aquila's wife – composed the document.

Informed by studies of how Greek, Israelite, Jewish, and Roman sacrifice legitimizes, privileges, and confirms father–son relationships, Eisenbaum unveils several levels of Hebrews' androcentric presuppositions, including how christological categories of sonship connecting Jesus to the Davidic line and priesthood connecting him to the order of Melchizedek are not contradictory, and how the sacrificial process serves, in Nancy Jay's famous formulation, as 'a remedy for having been

born of woman'. The point is not alien to scholars of Christian initiation rites, given that language of being 'born anew' or 'born again' (so John 3) suggests a replacement of the biological mother by mother church. So too, the water of baptism replaces amniotic fluid. Jay takes this point a step further in arguing, in Eisenbaum's words, that there is a 'symbolic opposition between sacrifice and childbirth, and thus women'. Sacrifice, performed by men, extirpates from them women's biological connections and at the same time establishes for them a new and eternal relationship.

For the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus' roles of Son, Priest and Perfect Sacrifice make sense within this androcentric theoretical framework. Jesus is Son in the way sacrificial theory would approve, for Jesus' mother is absent, and the divine Father – Hebrews emphasizes Jesus' role as 'Son of God' more than the rest of the New Testament save perhaps the Johannine literature – has no consort. As Eisenbaum observes, Hebrews 'does not feel the need to explain the lack of a mother in the production of a son because patrilineal genealogies are predicated on the exclusion of the female'. Sacrifice as social function necessarily (?) divides, excludes and erases even as it unites.

Jesus' role as High Priest shares androcentric underpinnings, for a priest who offers blood sacrifice is 'ordained' by his male predecessors. The sacrifice of the Christ 'establishes a new patriline' replacing the one established through Aaron. It creates and maintains the relationship, the new covenant, among Father, Son and community, and this relationship – to return to gender constructions – transcends descent from women.

Hebrews could, however, be seen as offering an alternative to Jay's model, for the list of heroes includes both women and ethnic outsiders. '*By faith* Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed' (Heb. 11.11); '*By faith* the prostitute Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace' (11.31). Granted, the two women are coded according to gender roles of maternity, prostitution and hospitality, and granted Rahab may be seen as a traitor to her people ('those who did not believe' is a loaded term in today's discourse; better would be to state that the people of Jericho believed otherwise). Nevertheless, in Hebrews, sacrifice is defined apart from (only) human priest and so male privilege, and natal family, class, sex or ethnicity does not determine those who participate in its benefits.

One alternative to sacrifice's male privilege is the argument for Hebrews' female authorship, but as Ruth Hoppin begins 'The Epistle to the Hebrews Is Priscilla's Letter', we see that certain privileged lineages remain. Hoppin opens with the sad rehearsal of how her thesis has been suppressed. Even explicitly feminist works – well aware of Adolf Von Harnack's proposal concerning Priscilla's authorship as well as Hoppin's careful development of the thesis – tend to dismiss the idea. Granted, the case is substantially an argument from silence, but I do wonder about the extent to which the concept of women's authorship is dismissed not because the evidence is problematic but because the concept is too alien even for those aware of women's roles in the early church. Whether Hoppin will convince or not, her thesis deserves a hearing, and her experiences warn us what happens when we offer new theories of women's history.

In Hoppin's analysis, Priscilla fits every clue Hebrews gives to its authorship, and every argument against women's authorship is easily countered. First, she dismisses evidence of the so-called 'masculine participle' διηγούμενον in Heb. 11.32.

Looking both to the form and the intention of the verse, Hoppin grants that the author appears masculine and the participle so indicates, but she also offers two other interpretations. One is that of an 'editorial masculine' by which the author speaks not only for herself but for like-minded others; the better case, however, is taking the participle not as masculine but as neuter (cf. Hebrews 11.32). She finally offers that a copyist changed the text to erase a female reference. Before we dismiss this as wishful speculation, Hoppin trenchantly asks: 'Would someone really change a letter to suppress female identity? Ask Nympha or Junia.'

Next, Hoppin addresses Hebrews' anonymity, a phenomenon rare in the early church. When authors were unknown, pseudonyms were provided. Thus Hebrews' anonymity requires explanation, and that a woman's authorship was known but suppressed is not unimaginable.

Hoppin then locates internal as well as external evidence for identifying the author, including the connection to apostles and second-generation believers (2.1–4) prior to 70 CE (given the lack of reference to the Temple's destruction), reference to Timothy (13.23), affinities with Paul's writings, interest in women and their concerns and association with Rome demonstrated via *1 Clement*. Tracing references to Priscilla in Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians and Timothy, drawing upon ancient and medieval commentaries, and citing archaeological remains and reconstructions, Hoppin locates Priscilla both as a possible student of Peter and as a member of a distinguished Roman family who would have provided her the education necessary for composing such a rhetorically informed text.

Interest in women appears explicitly in ch. 11. Not only does Hebrews mention Sarah (11.11) and Rahab (11.31), the list of worthies alludes to the widow of Zarephath and the Shunnamite woman who 'received their dead by resurrection' (11.35; see 1 Kgs 17.8–24 and 2 Kgs 4.18–37). Hoppin posits that the three men named in reverse chronological order (11.32: Barak, Jephthah, Samuel) offer an 'oblique reference' to three women whose stories mark their lives: Deborah, Jephthah's daughter and Hannah. Noting that the NIV among other translations 'downgrades' Sarah's role by making Abraham the subject of 11.11, Hoppin rereads the line as stressing *Sarah's* faith and so reception of power to conceive. Nor does she accept that 11.11 cannot refer to Sarah's faith because Genesis portrays her as a skeptic; to the contrary, as Hoppin remarks: 'before we dismiss Sarah as a model of faith on such grounds, consider how Abraham responded to the divine promise: "Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed" (Gen. 17.17)'. Even more women may be present in Hebrews 11; for example, 11.34's description of who 'won strength out of weakness' and 'put foreign armies to flight' could point to Judith (cf. *1 Clem.* 55.3). The note to the one who escaped the sword in the same verse could be a reference to Esther (4.11), and the tortures listed in 11.37 may allude to the valiant widow of 2 (and 4) Maccabees.

Hoppin also finds in Hebrews a female sensibility (she is careful to avoid some naturalized determinism). She finds 'the emotional commitment of parenthood' in the description of Moses' infancy (11.23), a poignant note concerning Moses' severing of connection with Pharaoh's daughter (11.24) and even a sentimental recognition of how quickly relationships between parents and children end (12.10). Hebrews in Hoppin's view teaches not by command but by persuasion, tact, empathy and 'tender sympathy'; thus it attests 'a writer who is profoundly nurturing'.

Feminist exegesis takes numerous forms. Some readers privilege a relatively strict historical investigation and so dismiss arguments from silence and place the burden of proof (or at least convincing argument) on those who argue for evidence of women's activity. Others take what might be called a hermeneutics of imagination: why not adopt a more generous approach to historical investigation and so cite what at least is plausible? This latter group might find Hoppin's thesis particularly appealing.

In certain contexts feminists are condemned for bearing the name. Outsiders assume they know what 'feminism' means, and the definitions proffered typically insist that feminists hate men, promote abortion, insist on erasing any distinction between men and women, seek to undermine the church ... In the United States, the term 'feminazi' – coined, I believe, by conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh – is seen by many as an apt term. Outsiders to feminism would profit from reading what the authors of these ten essays have to say. Feminists are no longer 'aliens and exiles' in the biblical guild. Their voices – our voices – will continue to speak to new readers, and new situations will give rise to new readings. It is doubtful that we will find perfectors who can resolve all the exegetical and hermeneutical issues the texts raise; as readers continue to read, it is doubtful that the list of such issues will ever be complete.

Going All the Way?
Honoring the Emperor and Sacrificing Wives and Slaves in 1 Peter 2.13–3.6

Warren Carter

First Peter commands its hearers to submit to 'every human authority' including the emperor (βασιλεῖ, 2.13), and to 'honor (τιμᾶτε) the emperor' (2.17). This civic honoring accompanies the domestic submission exhorted by the subsequent repeated commands to submit (2.18; 3.1, 5): slaves to masters (2.18–25) and Christian wives to non-Christian husbands (3.1–6).[1] But neither the letter nor its contemporary interpreters specify how the emperor is to be honored in these civic and domestic realms. What was the repertoire of practices, the range of honoring behaviors, available to late first-century women and men? What are the hearers of 1 Pet. 2.13, 17 being commanded to do? What are the consequences of these behaviors for societal interaction?

Consideration of these questions has significance for three related Petrine issues.

1. Central to contemporary debates about 1 Peter has been the issue of Christian civic participation. J.H. Elliott's conversionist sectarian model of Petrine Christianity emphasizes internal identity consolidation and a separationist stance vis-à-vis society.[2] D. Balch, though, offers a more assimilationist perspective in which groups lessen group–society tensions and acculturate by selectively adapting values and practices from the dominant culture while maintaining their own identity.[3] Explicating the diverse ways in which late first-century inhabitants of

1 'Every state is composed of households', Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.2.1–2. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 20.13.2–3) declares that the Romans, in contrast to the Lacedaemonians, shaped household life and relationships maintaining 'the ancestral honours of sacrifices'. On household codes, see L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978, 1993), pp. 162–238; D. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS, 26; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); W. Carter, *Households and Discipleship: A Study of Matthew 19–20* (JSNTSup, 103; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); J.H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), pp. 484–617.

2 J.H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2nd edn, 1990), p. 79, 'set apart and disengaged from the routine affairs of civic and social life'. P.J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg–Fortress, 1996), pp. 52–55. For critique, P. Harland, 'Honoring the Emperor or Assailing the Beast: Participation in Civic Life Among Associations (Jewish, Christian and Other) in Asia Minor and the Apocalypse of John', *JSNT* 77 (2000), pp. 99–121, esp. pp. 101–107.

3 Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*; *idem*, 'Hellenization/Acculturation in 1 Peter', in C. Talbert (ed.), *Perspectives on 1 Peter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986), pp. 79-101; J.W. Berry, 'Acculturation as Varieties of Adaptation', in A.M. Padilla (ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, Models, and Some Findings* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 9–25. See the 'Review Essay' of A. Wire in *RSR* 10 (1984), pp. 209–16, and S.R. Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter* (SBLDS 162; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 112–77 (liminal identity).

'Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia' (1.1) honored the emperor addresses a neglected aspect of this debate about group–society relations in 1 Peter. I will argue that the commands to honor the emperor have less to do with a collision of demands and more to do with providing a strategy whereby a relatively powerless group negotiates public expectations.

2. This debate over 1 Peter's separationist or assimilationist stance has special interest for feminist interpreters. Intent on determining whether, and if so how, biblical material can inform the struggle for the full humanity of women and men, feminist biblical scholarship has not found much help from 1 Peter. Schüssler Fiorenza concludes that 1 Peter urges on women and slaves total submission and costly societal conformity. Martin (in relation to African-American experiences), Dowd, Corley, Tanzer and Malone rightly find the emphasis on the passive endurance of suffering and abuse to be a dangerous and untenable message for contemporary women.[4] These discussions have not, though, explored the civic and household implications of the command to 'honor the emperor'. Elaborating this command will require revisiting the question of whether 1 Peter offers *any* good or liberating news to its female hearers.
3. While interpreters have commonly not investigated the repertoire of practices available for honoring the emperor, they have consistently claimed that 2.13, 17 forbids one behavior. The letter urges submission and honor *except* when it conflicts with the greater loyalty of doing God's will.[5] Specifically, so it is argued, it forbids participation in idolatrous worship in the civic or domestic sphere where wives and slaves typically participated in the husband's/master's religious observances.[6] In those spheres, 'God, and not the political powers, must be granted one's absolute subordination.' Slaves must resist 'in all reverence/fear' (ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ,

4 E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 260–66; C.J. Martin, 'The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: "Free Slaves" and "Subordinate Women"', in C.H. Felder (ed.), *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), pp. 206–31; K.E. Corley, '1 Peter', in E. Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures: II. A Feminist Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), pp. 349–60; S. Dowd, '1 Peter', in C.A. Newsom and S.H. Ringe (eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, expanded edn, 1998), pp. 370–72; S.J. Tanzer, '1 Pet 3:1–7 Wives (and Husbands) Exhorted', in C. Meyers, R.S. Kraemer and T. Craven (eds.), *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), pp. 497–98; M.T. Malone, *Women in Christianity. I. The First Thousand Years* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), p. 81.

5 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 72, 184–87, 209, 211, 218. Similarly J.R. Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC, 49; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), pp. 132, 167, 171; P. Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James and Jude* (IBC; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1995), p. 51; P.H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 104, 115–16; Dowd, '1 Peter', p. 371. Harland ('Honoring the Emperor', p. 115) distinguishes permissible honors and forbidden cultic (idolatrous) honors, citing 1.14–19; 4.3–4. E. Best (*1 Peter* [NCB; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971], p. 115) disagrees.

6 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 2.25.1, 3, a woman 'should share in all [her husband's] possessions and sacred rites'; Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom* (*Mor.* 140D), 'it is befitting for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in'. Plutarch warns, 'with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favor' (140D). Cicero, *Leg.* 2.8.19–22. See C. Osiek and D.L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 81–87.

2.18) and 'because of consciousness of God' (διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ, 2.19), practices contrary to God's will such as 'idolatrous forms of worship'.[7] A wife's submission to her husband (3.1) does not include the sacrificial worship of his gods or of the emperor. Her 'reverent' behavior (ἐν φόβῳ, 3.2) means, as in 2.18, that she cannot submit to 'an act incompatible with her faith'.[8] Slaves and wives are paradigmatic for the (non-)submissive behavior of all Christians[9] who cannot honor the emperor in cultic acts. For this response, they suffer.

This conventional approach, though, is not without its problems. Foremost is that it does not explain how the emperor is to be honored. Even if the claim of selective (non-) submission is correct, it delineates only how *not* to honor the emperor.

Further, the focus on cultic non-participation is inadequate because it frames 'honoring' behavior in monolithic 'religious' terms. The inadequacy lies not in previous claims that the imperial cult lacked emotion and was not a 'genuinely' religious activity.[10] At this distance, we can neither determine motivations nor judge religious 'genuineness', especially by employing anachronistic contemporary emphases on inner emotions that ignore the role of public activity in Greco-Roman religious observance.[11] Rather, the unsatisfactory nature of the almost exclusive focus on cultic non-participation lies in inappropriately isolating and foregrounding 'religious' activity while ignoring the interconnection of the so-called political, social, economic and religious arenas in Roman imperial society. In the context of the structures and values of imperial society, honoring the emperor, including cultic participation, will appear complexly diverse and multi-faceted.

I proceed in three sections. Part 1 delineates the repertoire of ways to honor the emperor available to the letter's late-first century recipients.[12] Part 2 questions 1 Peter's supposed prohibition of cultic participation. Part 3 explores some contemporary implications of the letter's approach.

1. How to Honor the Emperor

The Roman empire exerted control through two activities that secured enormous power, wealth and status for Roman and allied elites: warfare when diplomacy did

7 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 186, 194–95; Elliot (*1 Peter*, p. 516) notes that slaves were 'obligated to the religion of their owners' but does not comment on an exception for Christian slaves.

8 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 208–10; Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, pp. 81–116. In discussing 3.1, Elliott (*1 Peter*, pp. 553–58, 582–85) observes that the encouraged submissive wifely conduct 'contrasts sharply with Greco-Roman household instruction which expected wifely devotion to the gods of the husband' (p. 559).

9 Michaels, *1 Peter*, pp. 145–46, 171; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 187 n. 95, 192, 194, 199, 204, 209, 211; Elliott, *1 Peter*, pp. 523, 542, 583.

10 S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 9–11, 117–21; P.A. Harland, 'Honours and Worship: Emperors, Imperial Cults and Associations at Ephesus (First to Third Centuries CE)', *Studies in Religion/Science Religieuses* 25 (1996), pp. 319–34, esp. p. 323 and n. 13.

11 W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 275; 'Greek religion is turned to the outward realities'.

12 Much scholarship recognizes that there is no evidence for an emperor-initiated decree demanding worship. The letter's recipients' suffering comprises verbal abuse and socio-economic exclusion.

not secure submission, and taxation.[13] 1 Peter's five provinces knew submission through diplomatic and military means.[14] They also experienced the intimidating and taxing presence of troops stationed in parts of their territory,[15] including requisitions of labor and resources for road construction,[16] along with taxes and tributes, often paid in kind, on production and transportation.[17] Rome's military-political-social-economic power was intertwined with religious claims that Rome was the gods' agent, especially Jupiter's, to spread the divine blessings of Roman control and law.[18] Submission to Roman rule (2.13) and honoring the emperor (2.17) meant not contesting Roman power, compliance with its laws and social order, and paying taxes.[19]

13 J. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 6, 144-55; G.E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 'Force is the basis of political sovereignty'; pp. 51, 195; for elaboration and bibliography, W. Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), pp. 9–53.

14 Asia became a province in 133 BCE by treaty (T.R.S. Broughton, 'Roman Asia Minor', in T. Frank [ed.], *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome* [6 vols.; Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938], IV, pp. 499–918 [505]). King Nicomedes IV bequeathed Bithynia to Rome in 74 BCE (Broughton, 'Roman Asia Minor', p. 526). In 63 BCE it was combined with Pontus, the former kingdom of the imperially ambitious King Mithradates, that Rome controlled after a military defeat in 69 BCE. Mithradates's death in 63 BCE and his son Pharnaces's submission to Pompey. In 63 CE the last client-king Polemo abdicated (Suetonius, *Nero* 18). Galatia became a province in 25 BCE when its king was killed in battle (Broughton, 'Roman Asia Minor', p. 593; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* [2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993], I, pp. 61–79). Cappadocia became a province in 17 CE after King Archelaus, suspected of disloyalty, died (Broughton, 'Roman Asia Minor', p. 595); see also W.E. Gwatkin, *Cappadocia as a Roman Procuratorial Province* (University of Missouri Studies, 5; Columbia: University of Missouri, 1930), pp. 7–16.

15 Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I, pp. 71–79, 188–42, 250–53; maps on pp. 120, 130–31; D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 574–75; H.D.M. Parker, *The Roman Legions* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1971), p. 148; Gwatkin, *Cappadocia*, pp. 20, 36–37, 42–44, 55–62; Pliny has soldiers in Pontus-Bithynia (*Letters* 10.100 -103, 106–107). On Roman military intimidation, Josephus, *War* 2.372–73; 3.108; S. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

16 Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I, pp. 126–27 on extensive roadbuilding in Galatia–Cappadocia.

17 A tax of a tenth or a seventh to a fifth of crop production, Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I, pp. 241–59, esp. 247–53, also pp. 134, 168; Broughton, 'Roman Asia Minor', pp. 797–812 for imperial and municipal taxes; G. Stevenson, *Roman Provincial Administration* (New York: G.E. Stechert, 1939), pp. 133–55; S. Dickey, 'Some Economic and Social Conditions Affecting the Expansion of Christianity', in S.J. Case (ed.), *Studies in Early Christianity* (New York: Century, 1928), pp. 393–416. An Ephesian inscription indicates a tax of two-and-a-half per cent on all products shipped from Cappadocia, Galatia and Bithynia; see F. Meijer and O.V. Nijf, *Trade, Transport, and Society in the Ancient World: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 80–81; Broughton, 'Roman Asia Minor', pp. 817–39.

18 Virgil's Jupiter declares Rome is to 'bring all the world beneath [its] law' (*Aen.* 4.231). Anchises tells Aeneas 'to rule the nations' and 'to crown peace with law' (*Aen.* 6.851–53). Rome is 'to impose on the conquered tributes, laws, and Roman jurisdiction' (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.6). See Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, pp. 7–53.

19 Did Christians honor the emperor by serving in the army? Tertullian argues against Christian involvement (*Apol.* 16.8; *De Idol.* 19), suggesting that some did. See J. Helgeland, R.J. Daly and J.P. Burns, *Christians and the Military: The Early Experience* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 21–30, pp. 48–55.

More particularly, the imperial cult provided opportunity to honor the emperor. Since Augustus's permission to several cities in 29 BCE to establish the cult, this arena of honor had expanded significantly by the late first century CE.[20] Price argues that the cult represented the emperor to provincials in terms familiar from the worship of the gods.[21] It comprised part of the network of power that created and expressed the relationship of ruler and ruled, that defined the role of the emperor and conceptualized the world.

The cult rendered the emperor visible to the public with temples in central civic locations, statues of emperors in porticoes, gymnasia, baths and temples, and altars and/or special rooms dedicated to the emperor in a god's temple.[22] Festivals lasting several days 'formed the essential framework of the imperial cult'.[23] Usually held annually, they marked significant imperial events (accession, birthday). New events (military victories) were honored spontaneously. Festivals focused either exclusively on the emperor or were attached to festivals of other deities. Celebrations took place in sanctuaries but also in major civic locations: central squares, council houses, theaters, stadia, gymnasia. Processions through cities linked sites where prayers and hymns were recited, sacrifices of wine, cakes, incense, and, for public festivals, the killing of animals, normally a bull, were offered 'on behalf of' and 'to' the emperor,[24] statues were garlanded, feasts hosted, and games and competitions staged.[25]

20 Dio Cassius (51.20.6–9) says Augustus permitted the imperial cult to be established in Pergamum in 29 BCE by the provincial council (*koinon*) of Asia, and also in Ephesos, Nicaea and Nicomedia, the governor's center in Bithynia where it was administered by the *koinon* or 'Commonwealth of the Greeks of Bithynia'; A. Shepherd, 'Bithynia', *ABD* 1, pp. 750–53. Other centers for Asia were established in Smyrna c. 23–26 CE (cf. Tacitus, *Ann* 4.15) and Miletus in Caligula's reign. Ephesos dedicated the temple of the Sebastoi in 89/90 CE. S.J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 7–49. Numerous municipal sites developed through the century. Price (*Rituals and Power*, pp. 58, 66–67) counts priests of Augustus in 34 cities in Asia Minor, priests of Tiberius in 11 cities, at least 80 cities with priests of the collective Sebastoi, and 35 cities using the title *neokoros* or 'temple warden' by the late first century. Mitchell (*Anatolia*, pp. 100–17) notes imperial cult temples in the three cities excavated in Galatia: Ancyra, Pessinus, Pisidian Antioch.

21 Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 7–11, 247–48. S. Friesen ('The Cult of the Roman Emperors in Ephesos: Temple Wardens, City Titles, and the Interpretation of the Revelation of John', in H. Koester [ed.], *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995], pp. 229–50) emphasizes the cult's roles in the late first century when Roman power was familiar to the eastern provinces. Friesen argues that the burgeoning observance of the cult, indicated by the dedication of the provincial temple in Ephesos (89/90 CE), by numerous city temples throughout Asia, and by the increasing first-century adoption of the formal city title *neokoros* or 'temple warden', involved issues of municipal identity, civic cohesion and competition among cities, and provided 'new responsibilities and honors for the elite sectors' that transformed 'the activities and public profiles of the wealthy and powerful' (pp. 243–45, 249).

22 Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 133–206.

23 Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 101–102.

24 Price (*Rituals and Power*, pp. 207–33) argues for the 'on behalf of' view, contested by Harland ('Honours and Worship', p. 330) and Friesen (*Twice Neokoros*, pp. 146–53). Price (*Rituals and Power*, pp. 210–14) justifies his claim by arguing that there was reluctance to divinize emperors and their families. Friesen (*Twice Neokoros*, pp. 148–52) points to inscriptions that indicate sacrifices offered to emperors. Friesen rejects Price's claim that ambivalency about the emperor's nature and position (divine–human) shaped the offering of sacrifices. Rather, sacrifices honored imperial authority in which the emperor ordered society ('to') and the gods protected the chosen emperor ('on behalf of').

25 Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 101–32.

Participation in the cult varied according to geography, culture, social status, legal status (citizen, non-citizen) and gender. The area of Anatolia in which the five provinces were located was extensive, about 130,000 square miles,[26] and diverse ethnically, culturally and economically. Historical resources have survived in uneven quantities.

In relation to geography and culture, Price concludes that for Asia Minor 'the cult although widespread was not ubiquitous'.[27] Observance, which often accompanied communal organization and Hellenistic culture, is especially lacking in rural areas with few cities and limited communal organization. Sanctuaries to rural gods often show little or no imperial connection.[28]

The issue of the imperial cult's presence in rural areas is pertinent given Elliott's claim of 'the rural location of the letter's addressees'.[29] If Elliott and Price are correct, participation in the imperial cult was hardly an option for some (a minority? majority?) of the letter's hearers. But while Elliott notes an important aspect of the diverse world addressed by 1 Peter, his claim is not entirely persuasive. There were urban Christians in Asia Minor (Revelation 2–3). No doubt some of the letter's hearers occupied a rural location since, as Elliott observes, the addressed provinces were predominantly rural,[30] and the empire's rural inhabitants outnumbered urban dwellers by 'up to ten to one' and probably 'eight to one' in central Anatolia.[31] But as Mitchell argues against Price, rural location does not mean the cult's absence. He claims that Price's argument is circular since the presence of the imperial cult is often the only remaining sign of significant communal organization. Mitchell also points to evidence for the cult's spread through rural Paphlagonia (an oath of loyalty) and Cappadocia (provincial games).[32]

Participation of elites in the imperial cult is well recognized. It has, though, often been misunderstood from two perspectives, namely that the elite viewed the imperial cult with skepticism or that it was largely their domain[33] and so irrelevant to the Christian movement comprising lower-status members. The former view is not sustainable (see below), and the latter view is questionable on two grounds. Christians represented a cross-section of society, minus the uppermost and lowest

26 Elliott, *1 Peter*, p. 84.

27 Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 79.

28 Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 78-100. Price notes less evidence for its observance in the north and east of Asia Minor (p. 80) and little evidence from villages in Rough Cilicia and Pisidia (though much from Phrygia and Lydia, pp. 79–86). The cult was modeled on pervasive Greek culture (pp. 87–91), but there were non-Greek-speaking (pp. 91–92) and rural areas where urban Greek culture did not penetrate. Where there were no or few cities (inland Mysia; Paphlagonia; Cappadocia; the Anatolian plateau south of Ancyra; highlands of Phrygia, pp. 94–100), there is little communal organization, and Hellenistic or imperial influence is lacking.

29 Elliott, *1 Peter*, p. 90.

30 Pliny (*Letters* 10.96.4, 9) describes Christians in Bithynia and Pontus as 'many individuals of every age and class, both men and women ... [from] not only the towns, but the villages and rural districts' including Roman citizens.

31 Mitchell (*Anatolia,* I, p. 244) suggests that Anatolia (including Bithynia, Pontus and Galatia) numbered 8,190,000 (just over half of Asia Minor's population) with 7,280,000 being rural. Each of Anatolia's 130 or so cities (larger cities like Sardis, Nicomedia and Ancyra had about 25,000 inhabitants; most cities had between 5,000 and 15,000 inhabitants) had many small villages dependent on them.

32 Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I, p. 102 including n. 8.

33 Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 107–108, 114–17.

levels.[34] And while urban elites were significantly involved in the cult, this 'communal celebration' provided many ways for people of varying social status to honor the emperor.[35]

Elite men and women[36] provided the personnel and funding (beyond public monies) necessary to[37]

- fund festivals,
- contribute to a new building or maintain a temple,
- buy priesthoods[38] and function as priests/priestesses and/or officials,[39]
- participate in festival processions, perhaps carrying imperial images, or representing one's city/village in another city's procession,
- supply cult statues and decorations for temples,
- sponsor spectacles (e.g. gladiatorial displays, horseracing, animal fights, athletic contests) and feasts,
- pay for sacrifices including incense or libations offered by citizens.[40]

Roles such as high priest or priestess were available, respectively, to men and women. Priestesses included the wealthy and powerful Julia Severa who as a member of a leading family was for three terms the high-priestess (ἀρχιέρεια) of the imperial cult at Akmoneia and a generous patron to the synagogue, the fabulously wealthy Mendora who continued her family's long line of prominent civic patronage in a city in Pamphylia, and the wealthy Plancia Magna of Perge who continued the Plancii family's enormous social and political prestige and civic benefaction.[41] *If* any

34 The consensus of recent work: E.A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century* (London: Tyndale, 1960); W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 51–73; Osiek and Balch, *Families*, pp. 91–102.

35 Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 107.

36 E.S. Wood, *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images, 40 BC – AD 68* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999); R.S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 80–92; M.T. Boatwright, 'Plancia Magna of Perge: Women's Roles and Status in Roman Asia Minor', in S.B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 249–72; for a good overview and bibliography, J.M. Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke–Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 14–119, especially pp. 45–52 for women as religionists.

37 Examples from Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 62–65, 101–32.

38 Price (*Rituals and Power*) comments that these priesthoods 'like priests of traditional cults, were not specialists' (p. 63); the duration of the office could vary from single occasions (p. 103) to lifelong and hereditary offices (p. 63). Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, pp. 76–113, 169–214.

39 Friesen, 'Cult', pp. 244–45.

40 Mitchell (*Anatolia*, I, pp. 108-11) identifies five categories of benefactional activity by eighteen Galatian imperial priests from Ancyra: providing oil for the gymnasium; sponsoring public banquets; providing public entertainment (gladiatorial, athletic, horse, chariot and hunting spectacles, processions; statues); supplying grain and multiple sacrifices of animals (a 'hecatomb', a hundred at a time).

41 Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, pp. 81–89; Harland, 'Honoring the Emperor', pp. 112 n. 48, 114; R.A. Kearsley, 'Asiarchs, *Archiereis*, and the *Archiereiai* of Asia', *GRBS* 27 (1986), pp. 183–92; P. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTSMS, 69; Cambridge: Cambridge University

of the Christians addressed by 1 Peter were among the elite citizens of the five provinces, these actions would comprise ways of honoring the emperor.[42]

The imperial cult and its civic festivals were not the elite's exclusive domain. Price describes festivals as a 'communal celebration' with a 'carnival atmosphere'.[43] Colorful and energetic celebrations, including feasts for men and sometimes for women,[44] attracted urban crowds and from surrounding rural areas. Processions through cities and celebrations at various centers ensured visibility, access, citizen-participants and spectators. One city 'instructed all to wear bright clothing, even the household slaves being free from work'. Distributions ensured all citizens could offer sacrifices. Citizens were expected to attend feasts, and sometimes invitations were extended to non-citizens (slaves and foreigners). As processions passed dwellings, householders were to sacrifice on small altars outside.[45] If any of the addressees of 1 Peter were male or female citizens (2.16?[46]), these means of honoring the emperor were available to them.

The role of non-citizens in festivals is important given Elliott's view that the term παροίκους (2.11) describes the readers' precarious social and legal situation as 'resident aliens'.[47] The term denotes non-citizens excluded from voting, landholding, and civic office holding but subject to taxes, military service and limited cultic

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Press, 1991), pp. 58–60; Boatwright, 'Plancia Magna of Perge', pp. 250, 263 64; for Menodora, R. Van Bremen, 'Women and Wealth', in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 223–42. For other women as priestesses of the imperial cult, see the inscriptions in M. Lefkowitz and M. Fant (eds.), *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2nd edn, 1992), pp. 300–306, esp. n. 425 (Mamia in Pompeii), n. 429 (Lalla in Lycia), n. 432 (Tata in Aphrodisias), 433 (Cassia Victoria in Misenum); R. MacMullen, 'Women in Public in the Roman Empire', *Historia* 29 (1980), pp. 208–18, esp. 213–14; Mitchell (*Anatolia,* I, pp. 102–103) notes Caecilia Tertulla in Attaleia in Pamphylia.

42 B. Winter (*Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994], pp. 11–40) argues that 1 Peter urges its elite hearers to perform visible and material acts of civic benefaction for public recognition (2.11–14). Winter helpfully identifies the practice of civic benefaction (though he ignores the imperial cult), but minimal Christian presence among the most wealthy and lack of inscriptional evidence indicate this behavior was available to very few Christians, if any. On Erastus of Corinth (Rom. 16.23), see F.M. Gillman, 'Erastus', *ABD* 2, pp. 571.

43 Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 122.

44 For women's sporadic participation in civic feasts in Italy, MacMullen, 'Women in Public', pp. 212–13.

45 Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 102, 112–13, 121. A decree from the Asian assembly recognizes 'the choir of all Asia' at Pergamum for offering hymns and sacrifices and conducting festivals and feasts (Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 105). For an inscription (not from Asia Minor) commemorating Tiberius's permission for the city of Gytheon in Sparta to celebrate the imperial cult, see R. MacMullen and E.N. Lane, *Paganism and Christianity 100–425 CE: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 74–76.

46 Elliott (*1 Peter*, p. 496) argues the term 'free' is not a theological metaphor but designates their social and legal status. Achtemeier (*1 Peter*, p. 186) seems to take it as a metaphor.

47 Elliott, *1 Peter*, pp. 94–95, 476–83, 496. Elliott suggests (pp. 481–82) that the term originally referred to literal παροίκοι and became a metaphor for 'all Christians in a secular society', though the term continues to emphasize the social, not cosmological, location of all Christians. My concern is not to decide the issue (actual location or a way of thinking about their situation; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 71, takes the latter option), but to recognize the expectations about social (non-)participation that result from either reading.

participation. They were often despised people dispossessed of land, and foreigners (women and men[48]) who were traders (e.g. Jas 4.13), artisans and teachers resident for more than thirty days. If the term literally describes the social-legal status of many/some of 1 Peter's recipients, their opportunities to honor the emperor comprised being spectators for processions and spectacles, and perhaps participants in feasts. Tertullian complains that in imperial festivals the 'common herd' (*vulgus*) joins in excessive drunken and immoral behavior 'in the open air, street by street' turning the city 'into a tavern' (*Apol.* 35.2). Non-citizens may or may not receive distributions to offer sacrifices. If the term is a theological metaphor and does not describe actual legal status,[49] it would suggest a more distant group–society relationship as would befit resident aliens.

Price's focus on festivals overlooks the important role of associations[50] in providing the non-elite (citizens and non-citizens, free and slave, males and females[51]) opportunities to honor the emperor. Associations or guilds (*collegia, sodalitas, societas* in Latin; θίασοι, ἐκκλησία, σύνοδοι, κοινωνία, συναγωγή in Greek) centered on a household, common trade, or deity, though these interests often overlapped.[52] Trade and artisan groups were usually homogeneous, comprising those of lower status, 'the urban poor, slaves and freedmen',[53] and providing an essential arena for the socio-economic activity of artisans and merchants.[54] Some associations combined hierarchical social structures involving wealthy patrons (including women) with more egalitarian structures, bringing together male and female, slave and free/freed, citizen and non-citizen and/or resident foreigners.[55] Cultic observances,

48 Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society*, pp. 73–91.

49 Achtemeier finds support for recipients of 'mixed economic and social backgrounds' (*1 Peter*, pp. 55–57, 172–78). A metaphorical use of 'alien' and 'exile' (introduced by ὡς in 2.11) coheres with the use of metaphors for Israel to address its Gentile readers (1.1 'diaspora'; 1.17 'time of exile'; 5.13 'Babylon').

50 Harland, 'Honours and Worship', pp. 328–34; *idem*, 'Honoring the Emperor', pp. 110–16; J.N. Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (JSNTSup, 132; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 110–35. On associations, J.S. Kloppenborg and S. Wilson (eds.), *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

51 S.R. Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1992), pp. 141–45; for women's associations, Lefkowitz and Fant (eds.), *Women's Life*, pp. 155–58; an inscription from Philadelphia in Lydia (S. Barton and G.H.R. Horsley, 'A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament Churches', *JAC* 24 [1981], pp. 7–41) welcomes 'men and women, free people and slaves' (p. 9); for women in associations especially as patrons, MacMullen, 'Women in Public', pp. 210–12; S.G. Wilson, 'Voluntary Associations: An Overview', in Kloppenborg and Wilson (eds.), *Voluntary Associations*, pp. 1–15, esp. 11–12; J.S. Kloppenborg, 'Collegia and *Thiasoi*: Issues in Function, Taxonomy, and Membership', in *idem* and Wilson (eds.), *Voluntary Associations*, pp. 16–30, esp. 25–26.

52 Kloppenborg, 'Collegia', pp. 16–30.

53 Wilson, 'Voluntary Associations', pp. 10–11.

54 Broughton, 'Roman Asia Minor', pp. 841–46, esp. 842, notes associations in Ephesos for bakers, wine-dealers, wool-dealers, towel-weavers, hemp-dealers, garment-sellers, cobblers, temple-builders/carpenters, bed-sawyers, knob turners, silversmiths, surveyors, bath workers, fish-dealers, money-changers; in Thyatira, bronze workers, dyers, wool-dealers, linen workers, leather tanners, leather workers, bakers and slave dealers. Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce*, pp. 115–17, associations of shippers and merchants; for inscriptions, Meijer and Nijf, *Trade, Transport*, pp. 46, 75–78, 201.

55 A.H.M. Jones, 'The Economic Life of the Towns of the Roman Empire', in P.A. Brunt (ed.), *The Roman Economy: studies in Ancient Economic and Administrative History* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), pp. 43–45.

standards of moral behavior, and disciplinary procedures including exclusion for violations featured regularly.

Harland details several ways in which associations honored the emperor.[56] The least common involved associations of hymn singers and other performers and athletes with significant roles in the imperial cult's festival processions and related games and contests.[57] More commonly, associations used networks of civic benefaction to dedicate statues, altars or inscriptions to the emperor or related officials.[58] Associations also honored the patron gods and emperor (and/or previous emperors, the *Sebastoi* or 'revered ones') in mysteries, prayers, sacrifices and meals that included food offered to the gods.[59] Kraybill notes that guild houses associated with navigation and the grain trade in the port of Ostia contained places for worship, attesting, as did other ceremonies associated with 'harbors, trade venues and commercial rituals', an extensive confluence between the imperial cult and commerce.[60]

Several other ways of honoring the emperor existed. Price attests practices of swearing oaths in the emperor's name, or designating imperial statues as places of asylum for slaves and of invoking the emperor's name for help. Importantly, he observes the presence of imperial images in houses.[61] Presumably members of the household such as a wife and slaves honored the emperor and the householder's gods. In domestic cultic rituals, 1 Peter's hearers had opportunity and expectations to honor the emperor.

2. Did 1 Peter's Christians Offer Imperial Sacrifices?

In discussing Christians and the imperial cult in Pisidian Antioch, Mitchell argues that the cult's sacrifices were 'the chief source of meat which the Apostolic Council had forbidden'; its 'spectacular and enticing festivals' imposed 'conformity and a rhythm of observance on a compact population' and its calendar named the 'days, months, seasons and years' to be recognized. There existed an 'overwhelming pressure [on Christians] to conform imposed by the institutions of [the] city and the activities of [their] neighbors'.[62]

56 Harland ('Honours and Worship', p. 324) notes 'about 100 inscriptions relating to associations and guilds in Ephesus (I-III C.E.) ... over 20 pertain, in some way, either to worshipping or honouring the emperor'.

57 Harland, 'Honours and Worship', pp. 326–28; F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London: Duckworth, 1977), pp. 456–63.

58 Harland, 'Honoring the Emperor', pp. 110–12 and n. 48 and 51. The association of fishermen in Ephesos contributed to building the fishery toll-office and dedicated it to Nero, his mother and wife and to the Roman and Ephesian people. The guild of clothing cleaners at Akmoneia honored a high priest of the imperial temple at Ephesos with an inscription, a practice attested in at least seven other Asian inscriptions.

59 Harland, 'Honoring the Emperor', pp. 112–13; H. Pleket, 'An Aspect of the Emperor Cult: Imperial Mysteries', *HTR* 58 (1965), pp. 331–47. Harland, 'Honours and Worship', pp. 332–33. One association at Ephesos performed 'mysteries and sacrifices' annually to 'Demeter ... and to the Sebastoi gods', while the association of physicians sacrificed to Asclepius and the *Sebastoi*. References in inscriptions from Ephesos, Bithynia and Galatia to a figure called a *sebastophant* suggest someone who unveiled images of the *Sebastoi* in the ritual of associations.

60 Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce*, pp. 123–41.

61 Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 118–21.

62 Mitchell, *Anatolia*, I, p. 10.

Yet most interpreters of 1 Peter see resistance not conformity. First Peter, it is claimed, requires its readers to resist these pressures and not participate in cultic honors that involve sacrifices and idolatry. This argument usually appeals to passages such as 1.14–19 and 4.3–4 that refer to idolatry in a former way of life, and to phrases in 2.13–3.7 that supposedly limit submission to behavior acceptable to God's will.[63]

Several factors suggest, though, that 1 Peter responds to these pressures not by forbidding participation, but in fact by advocating it. For starters, it is worth observing that the commands to honor the emperor (2.13–14, 17) and for slaves and wives to submit to masters/husbands (2.18; 3.1) do not include exceptive circumstances. While interpreters draw lines to establish 'selective (non-)submission' and forbid sacrifices, the texts do not. Similarly in exhorting Christians to do the 'right' or the 'good' (2.12, see below), the text does not offer exceptions when cultural expectations and God's will collide. Does the absence of exceptions signify that 'everyone knew' where the lines were, or, rather, that there were no such lines and exceptions?

The assumption that 'everyone knows' is questionable because a monolithic withdrawal from sacrificial participation did not mark the early Christian movement.[64] Some Corinthian Christians[65] did not 'shun the worship of idols'. Paul was willing to eat 'sacrificial food either in an idol's temple or at home',[66] though other believers were not (1 Corinthians 8–10). The Apostolic Decree forbidding food offered to idols would be redundant if a common practice existed (Acts 15.28–29). In Asia, the letters of Revelation 2–3 attest divisions over cultic participation. The writer sternly rebukes the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2.6), the teaching of Balaam (Rev. 2.14–15) and 'the woman Jezebel' (Rev. 2.20) who encourage the eating of food sacrificed to idols (φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα). The author's demand to withdraw from the ritual practices of associations and cities (cf. 18.4), rooted in an understanding of the empire's demonic nature (ch. 13), is not the perception or practice of every/most Christian/s

63 2.13, 'because of the Lord' (διὰ τὸν κύριον); 2.17, the command to 'honor (τιμᾶτε) the emperor' is relativized by 'fear (φοβεῖσθε) God'; 2.18, 'in all reverence/fear' (ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ) and 2.19, 'because of consciousness of God' (διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ) require slaves to resist commands contrary to God's will, see also 3.2, a wife's 'reverent' behavior (ἐν φοβῳ). See below for an alternative reading.

64 For diversity in first-century Christian and Jewish involvements with various religious practices, P. Borgen, '"Yes", "No", "How Far?": The Participation of Jews and Gentiles in Pagan Cults', in T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 30–59. For 'Jewish involvement in city life' in Asia Minor, see Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, pp. 173–85, and 180–83 for five Jewish responses to non-Jewish religious activity (complete avoidance, general involvement with exemptions from pagan rites, civic involvement with avoidance of pagan worship, civic participation that 'turned a blind eye' and participation in cultic rites). Harland ('Honoring the Emperor', pp. 107–10) sustains active Jewish participation in civic life and associations; also L.L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 133–45. Moving from Jewish responses to Christian responses has limited usefulness given a longer Jewish interaction with Rome, and because, according to Josephus, Jews had imperial exemption from offering sacrifices (*Ant.* 19.280–85).

65 First Pet. 4.16 uses 'Christian' (χριστιανός), but of course it was not universally employed.

66 Borgen, '"Yes", "No", "How Far?"', p. 56. R.A. Horsley, 'Consciousness and Freedom Among the Corinthians: 1 Corinthians 8–10', *CBQ* 40 (1978), pp. 574–89.

in Asia Minor.[67] Pliny knows Christians who 'invoked our gods according to the formula I gave them and ... offered sacrifices of wine and incense before your image ...', as well as 'real Christians' who refused to do so (*Letters* 10.96).[68] Later, Tertullian finds it necessary to argue against Christians undertaking any activity or occupation connected with idolatry (*de Idol.* 17.1).[69] Setton attests that 'in the fourth century Christians, although not Bishops, regularly performed *adoratio* before the Emperor or his statue'.[70] It cannot be assumed that 1 Peter's recipients unanimously did not, or knew that they should not, participate in cultic ritual.

Similarly, it is surprising that a text that 'fairly teems with OT references, approximately forty-six quotations and allusions in all',[71] does not quote any scriptural prohibitions against idolatry. Such a quotation would certainly clinch the writer's argument – *if* that were the writer's point. Is such an obvious rhetorical strategy absent because 'everyone knows' that idolatry belongs to a former way of life (the dominant reading of 1.14–19; 4.3–4) and is forbidden to Christians? Or is it because 1 Peter makes no such prohibition, perhaps because some, including the author, regarded idolatrous practices as meaningless for those who fear God (2.17), and/or perhaps because such an injunction would contradict the letter's advocacy of Christian social participation?

It is difficult to imagine how the letter's strategy to overcome negative reports about Christians and rehabilitate them socially (2.12; 3.16) can be accomplished if Christians refuse to participate in cultic sacrifices and feasting.[72] Household traditions since Aristotle understood the patriarchal household as the state's basic unit.[73] Not to conform in civic, especially association, or domestic practices challenged the imperial status quo, the grand household, presided over by the emperor as *pater patriae* and as the one chosen by the gods to manifest their blessings and order among subjects.[74] The above analysis of honoring the emperor

67 A.Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), pp. 87–88; C.J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting* (JSNTSup, 11; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), pp. 87–94, 117–23; Thompson, *Book of Revelation*, pp. 116–32, 171–97; Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce*, pp. 139–40; Harland, 'Honoring the Emperor', pp. 116–20; W. Howard-Brook and A. Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), pp. 87–119.

68 For a possible ritual, D. Fishwick, 'Pliny and the Christians', *American Journal of Ancient History* 9 (1984), pp. 123–30.

69 J.H. Waszink and J.C.M. Van Winden, *Tertullianus de Idololatria* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987). P.G. Van der Nat observes that the treatise concerns 'the practice of Christian life in relation to the (often hidden) religious elements in the heathen world'. It was addressed to Christians who were not aware of the dangers, and to those who, aware of the dangers, 'close their eyes' to them (Waszink and Van Winden, *Tertullianus*, p. 9; cf. *de Idol.* 2.1).

70 K.M. Setton, *Christian Attitude Toward the Emperor in the Fourth Century* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), p. 205. Also J.C. Brunt, 'The Fate of Paul's Approach to the Problem of Food Offered to Idols', *NTS* 31 (1985), pp. 113–24.

71 W. Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in 1 Peter* (WUNT, 2/30; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1989), p. 43, for discussion, pp. 35–49.

72 Bechtler (*Following in His Steps*, pp. 83–87) provides a good summary of this standard scenario.

73 Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*; Carter, *Households and Discipleship.*

74 Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, pp. 1–53.

indicates the importance of cultic activity, especially within the associations in which Christians are likely to be involved, as well as within households where Christian slaves and wives are to submit to the husband/master's rituals. Cultic participation would provide incontestable visible, public evidence of honor for civic and domestic socio-political structures, including the emperor.

The central section of 1 Peter, concerned with doing the 'good/right' (2.14, 15, 20; 3.6, 10–11, 13–14, 17, 18b; 4.1–4, 15, 18, 19),[75] attests such a reading. Following Van Unnik, 'the good/right' refers not to Judeo-Christian 'good works' but to culturally determined social participation. But the constant effort to supply exceptive clauses and to draw lines between this culturally determined 'right/good' and God's will has deflected interpreters' attention from the implications of Van Unnik's argument. The command to honor the emperor, first articulated in 2.13, follows the exhortation in 2.12 to 'maintain good conduct among the Gentiles so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God'. To honor the emperor (2.13, 17) in terms of the cultural repertoire delineated above exemplifies the 'good conduct' God requires! It is difficult to imagine how the conventional view of selective (non-)submission with exemption from cultic rituals would constitute 'good conduct' able to convert (2.12) and silence (2.15) those who speak ill of this community. Similarly, how could the non-submissive behavior of wives who refuse to acknowledge their husband's gods and refuse sacrifices for the emperor be regarded by non-Christians as 'reverent and chaste behavior' that will win husbands to the Lord (3.2)?

What is the relationship between these textual imperatives and the social indicatives? Why do outsiders call Christians 'evil doers' (2.12) and criticize their behavior (2.15), necessitating the letter's damage control and corrective action? Since the commands to submit and honor comprise the strategy to overturn these negative verdicts, it is reasonable to suggest that the previous troublesome behavior involved acts understood culturally as non-submission and non-honoring. Insisting that the commands to honor and submit imply exceptive clauses and propose selective (non-)submission means maintaining what seems already to be practiced! Refusal to participate in the sacrificial ritual of associations and households would continue the status quo of suspicion, verbal animosity, and hostility. To continue this refusal contradicts the statements about the goal and power of submissive behavior to convert hostile spectators.

The repetition of the unqualified commands to submit (2.13, 17, 18; 3.1, 5) suggests, then, an emphasis that challenges existing Christian communal practices. The advocacy of behaviors that will patently exhibit submission and conformity in well-understood cultural terms comprises the author's solution to the 'problem' of considerable group–society tension caused not by conversion per se but by post-conversion practices of non-participation. Whether the author urges new behaviors or supports the practices of some and counters those of others (majority? minority?) is not clear. Interestingly, the author advocates behavior that Revelation 2–3 opposes!

The advocacy of such culturally conformist acts to replace non-participation is bound to meet with resistance and questions. Would not such practices be a

75 W.C. Van Unnik, 'The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter', *NTS* 1 (1954–55), pp. 92–110.

regression to their pre-Christian 'futile ancestral way of life'[76] (1.18) marked by idolatry (4.3)? How could such participation express not faithless compromise but allegiance to God? The letter presents submissive and honoring cultic participation in precisely these latter terms to distinguish it from former idolatrous practices.

First, the letter's opening section (1.1–2.10) strongly affirms the identity of its hearers as God's people. Achtemeier underlines the author's extensive use of language that 'designated the uniqueness of Israel in its relation to God' to describe the Christian community 'as grounded in the living Christ'.[77] In this context of securing their identity, commitments, and place within God's saving purposes, the letter's body (2.11–4.11), at the beginning of which the commands to honor and submit appear (2.13, 17), elaborates the implications of living out this identity. The commands to honor the emperor and submit domestically express, not contradict, this identity.

Second, the language that is so often interpreted as qualifying submission is better understood as legitimating submission as God's will. In 2.13–14 submission to the emperor (displayed in the behaviors outlined above) is 'because of the Lord' (διὰ τὸν κύριον). In 2.15 unqualified submission that brings public approval (2.14) and silences criticism (2.15) is 'God's will' (οὕτως ἐστὶν τὸν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ). In 2.16 this action, rooted in their freedom (2.16a), expresses their identity as slaves not of the emperor but 'of God' (ὡς θεοῦ δοῦλοι). In 2.17 honoring the emperor is, by the use of the same verb τιμάω, contextualized within honor due all people. It is distinguished from loving actions toward other Christians, subsumed under the fear of God demanded by the preceding imperative (τὸν θεὸν φοβεῖσθε), and reinforced by the likely editorial removal of the command to 'fear the king' from Prov. 24.21. Fearing God requires and relativizes honor for the emperor.

The same fear of God frames the wife's and household slave's submission. Submissive behavior expresses fear for God (ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ) in the household (2.17; 1.17). In 2.19 slaves who 'endure pain while suffering unjustly' do so 'mindful of God' or 'because of the knowledge of God shared with other Christians' (διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ).[78] In 3.2 the submissive wife exhibits 'reverent' behavior required by God. The phrase ἐν φόβῳ recalls the cognate verb for fearing God in 2.17. In both 2.18 and 3.2 the phrase serves not to qualify the slaves' and wives' submission,[79] but to frame and legitimate their unqualified submission (including honoring the emperor in household rituals) as part of fearing God. Such behavior cannot be a return to former 'futile ways' because they have been ransomed by the 'precious blood of Christ' (1.14–19). Now it is a consequence of, an expression of, God's will. To so honor the emperor is to do the good that God wills. Is performing such civic duties as God's will part of what 2.5 describes as 'offer[ing] spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'?[80]

76 W.C. Van Unnik ('The Critique of Paganism in 1 Peter 1.18', in E.E. Ellis and M. Wilcox [eds.], *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969], pp. 129–42) argues that the phrase depicts the former way of life as 'worth nothing at all', as 'null and void' (p. 141).

77 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 69–74.

78 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (London: A. & C. Black, 1969), p. 117. Best (*1 Peter*, p. 118) suggests 'mindful of God' or 'awareness'.

79 *Contra* e.g. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 194–95, 210.

80 Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, p. 168.

Third, the practice of cultic participation by Christians is also distinguished from their former pagan idolatry because their hearts are now given to Christ (3.15). Three times the letter identifies the heart's commitment, the center of human willing, perceiving, and acting, as constitutive of Christian existence.[81] As a people who have been born anew through God's great mercy and power to a life set apart to serve God and to await the completion of God's purposes (1.22), they are urged to express their identity in love for one another 'from the heart' (cf. 2.17; 3.8; 4.8; 5.14). In 3.3–4 a wife's external adornment is contrasted with her interior disposition and commitment, her heart that is known to God's sight. In 3.15 this instruction to Christian wives is extended to all Christians who are to 'sanctify/reverence Christ as Lord in your hearts', to acknowledge him as the one in whom God's saving purposes are manifested and will be triumphantly completed (4.7). Elliott comments that 'it is the internal disposition of the heart (which God alone can see) that matters most and that has God's approval'.[82]

How does this prioritizing of the heart's acknowledgment of Christ as Lord, the valuing of interior commitment, function in relation to the letter's concern with 'good actions among the Gentiles' (2.12)? These 'good actions' are public and visible (2.12) so that 'doing right' silences opponents (2.15). Prioritizing the heart's commitment to 'Christ as Lord' allows the letter's hearers to engage in the publicly conformist and submissive behavior of cultic participation without compromising loyalty to God. They can be seen to be compliantly honorable in culturally determined ways while reverencing and expressing loyalty to Christ as Lord in their hearts.

Such an emphasis on public, honorable and socially compliant behavior and internal loyalty to Christ explains the avoidance in 4.3-4 of six stereotypical immoderate behaviors, notably sexual and drunken vices. The final item in 4.3, 'wanton' or 'lawless'[83] idolatries, is often understood to condemn all idolatry.[84] But that conclusion overlooks its appearance at the end of a list that has condemned *immoderate behaviors*. Sex and wine are not prohibited per se, but in excess. It also ignores the highly unusual use of an adjective, 'wanton' or 'lawless' (ἀθεμίτοις), to qualify 'idolatries'. The adjective underlies the mode of observance.[85] So does the phrase 'the same wild profligacy' in 4.4 that summarizes the polemical emphasis of 4.3 on immoderate behavior and 'manifestations of frenzied and reckless living'.[86] The

81 J. Behm, 'καρδία', *TDNT* 3, pp. 611–13.

82 Elliott, *1 Peter*, p. 626.

83 BAGD, p. 20.

84 Elliott, *1 Peter*, p. 724; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 281–83.

85 The three other NT usages (1 Cor. 10.14; Gal. 5.20; Col. 3.4) of εἰδωλολατρία have no qualification, nor do the seven uses of the cognate noun εἰδωλολάτρης 1 Cor. 5.10, 11; 6.9; 10.7; Eph. 5.5; Rev. 21.8; 22.15). The adjective introduces an important perspective on idolatry and condemns a type of observance.

86 Elliott, *1 Peter*, p. 727. Philo depicts drunken and wanton behavior in associations (θίασοι; *Flacc.* 136; *Ebr.* 20–23); T. Seland, 'Philo and the Clubs and Associations of Alexandria', in Kloppenborg and Wilson (eds.), *Voluntary Associations*, pp. 110–27. The Dionysian association inscription prescribes strict sexual behavior (Barton and Horsley, 'Hellenistic Cult Group', p. 9). Tertullian (*Apol.* 35.2–3) attacks excessive public drunkenness ('to make the city look like nothing but a tavern'), lust, shameful behavior, the loss of order and the absence of 'modesty, decency, and chastity' that mark the imperial cult.

point of 4.3-4, then, concerns not engaging in socially disruptive behavior that threatens civic order (4.4).

Four Related Factors

Four further observations support the view that the command to honor the emperor means, for Christians in whose hearts Christ is Lord, divinely legitimated cultic participation in civic and (for Christian wives and slaves) domestic spheres.

First, of the 'holy wives' (αἱ ἅγιαι γυναῖκες) summoned as models of submission in 1 Pet. 3.5-6, Sarah receives special attention. The reference to calling Abraham 'Lord' evokes her laughter at the promise that she will bear a son in Gen. 18.12. But the emphasis in 1 Pet. 3.1 on submissive 'behavior' (ἀναστροφῆς) 'without a word' (ἄνευ λόγου) indicates that Sarah's actions are of greater interest. Arguably, no action exhibits her submission, willingness to suffer for another (2.21), and courage (3.6b) more than when she twice obeys Abraham's instructions to pretend to be his sister (Gen. 12.10–20; 20), in order to protect him in a foreign land.[87] In Egypt, Pharaoh 'took her [Sarah] for my wife'[88] (12.19), a phrase that connotes for first-century hearers Sarah's place in Pharaoh's household requiring sexual submission and participation in his cultic ritual. The second episode in ch. 20 shows Sarah's willingness to assume the same role with King Abimelech of Gerar. Sarah's submissive sexual and compliant cultic behavior expresses her inner commitment to Abraham and to God's purposes while ensuring her and Abraham's survival in threatening cultures. Significantly, Sarah's *actions* display the same strategy that 1 Peter urges on its hearers, external actions at odds with inner commitments to effect accommodation with the prevailing culture. Sarah 'does the good', including cultic participation, without terror (3.6b).

Second, a feature of first-century religious observance encourages the utilization of variances between public behaviors and internal loyalties as a means of coping with conflictive situations. Religious activity frequently focused on external and public acts of religious piety. This does not mean that observance lacked personal piety and feeling, but it does recognize that religion was 'primarily a public religion and not a religion of the individual'.[89] First Peter apparently exploits this public nature of religious observance. Cultic participation by Christians will be observed by others and will counter the impression that Christians threatened civic order, while Christian commitment is simultaneously maintained by reverencing Christ as Lord in the heart.

Third, 2.16 exhorts these 'slaves of God' to live as 'free people'. Several philosophical traditions understood freedom as primarily an inner quality not dependent on but indifferent to external circumstances or practices.[90] Epicurus, for example,

87 M. Kiley ('Like Sara: The Tale of Terror Behind 1 Peter 3:6', *JBL* 106.4 [1987], pp. 689–92) proposes this link with Gen. 12 and 20, arguing that Sarah is a model obedient spouse 'in an unjust and frightening situation in a foreign land/hostile environment'. Kiley does not develop his observation in the way that I do here.

88 Note the pronouns in Gen. 12.19–20 associated with γυνή: ἐμαυτῷ, σου and αὐτοῦ.

89 E. Kearns, 'Religion, Greek', in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.), *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edn, 1999), p. 1300; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 275.

90 Epictetus argues that freedom lies in abandoning dependence on external circumstances and doing the deity's will (*Dis.* 4.1.62–90; 1.12.7–16). The Cynic's calling means setting aside all else, living as Zeus's messenger in society and knowing the freedom of the good 'within you' (3.22, esp. 38–49).

recommends that 'the religious rites prescribed by law or custom should be observed, even if inconsistent with personal belief'. He exhorts Epicureans to 'sacrifice reverently and properly'. External cultic actions did not threaten individual freedom and belief.[91]

In discussing slavery, Seneca is very aware that external obedience does not mean wholehearted compliance.[92] In the political realm, Dio Cassius (52.35) knows that external acts do not express internal commitments. Maecenas warns Caesar Augustus against accepting expressions of honor, enforcing observance of imperial images, or building temples to Caesar because 'no little suspicion of insincerity would attach to its giving'. Rather, Caesar should develop loyalty in the heart: 'by your benefactions fashion other images in the hearts of your people, images which will never tarnish and perish'. Cultic practices do not mean inner loyalty; only the emperor's virtue can ensure that. Then 'within their thoughts you will ever be enshrined and glorified'.

Fourth, in the third century Origen seems to advocate 1 Peter's strategy. In commenting on the prohibition against bowing down to images in Exod. 20.5, Origen distinguishes between true worship (λατρεία) and adoration (προσκύνημα). True worship means worshiping the images with 'all one's soul' (ἐξ ὅλης ψυχῆς) in which outer actions express inner loyalty. In contrast to wholehearted worship, adoring an image involves pretending (καθυποκρινόμενος) to worship motivated not by genuine devotion but social custom (*In Exodum Homilia* 8.4). Rufinus's Latin translation of Origen and Procopius of Gaza's commentary (c. 500 CE) elaborate the pretense by saying that some persons adore the image of an emperor 'in deference to the emperors' though they know 'in their hearts' (*in corde ipsorum*) 'that the image is nothing' (*nihil est idolum*).[93] Origen's comments attest not only that Christians had not universally rejected cultic participation, but also a coping strategy comprising external actions and inner loyalties that seems identical to that proposed by 1 Peter.

3. Idle Speculation?

In Part 1, I have outlined various ways for honoring the emperor available to late first-century residents of the five provinces addressed by 1 Peter. In Part 2, I have questioned the ready assumption evident in numerous scholarly discussions that however the emperor was honored, and however slaves and wives submitted to their masters and husbands, Christians did not participate in cultic acts. I have identified a number of factors that suggest that 1 Peter urges Christians who reverence Christ in their hearts to honor the emperor by cultic observance in the civil and domestic spheres.

91 N.M. DeWitt, *Epicurus and his Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1954), pp. 184–85.

92 'Only the body is at the mercy and disposition of a master; but the mind is its own master, and is so free and unshackled ... It is, therefore, the body that Fortune hands over to a master; it is this that he buys, it is this that he sells; that inner part cannot be delivered into bondage' (*Ben.* 3.20.1–2). On the soul's indifference to and independence of the body, see A.A. Long, 'Soul and Body in Stoicism', in *idem*, *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 224–49.

93 I am following Setton, *Christian Attitude*, pp. 206–207.

I want now to return to an issue raised at the outset of this article, namely 1 Peter's contribution to the feminist struggle for full humanity of women and men. Sharon Dowd notes a distinction between 1 Peter's address to its first-century and modern audiences. For the latter, exhortations to slaves and women to suffer passively are not legitimate when 'options for healing for the abused' exist, for example, in 'shelters and counseling services'. But for first-century hearers, 1 Peter addressed 'a time when victims of abuse had no options. In that situation, the author counseled nonviolence (which was a way of demonstrating one's moral superiority over the oppressor) and alluded to the ultimate justice of God who vindicates the abused (2.23)'.[94] Kathleen Corley rejects the 'legitimation of the ill-treatment of women and slaves' and concludes, rightly, that for 'modern Christian women undergoing abuse in the home', 1 Peter's sacrificial model 'perpetuates a cycle of victimization and violence'. Sarah Tanzer agrees, concluding that 1 Peter offers 'a lofty justification for victimization, violence, and abuse'.[95]

While 1 Peter's urging of submission is certainly destructive in violent domestic situations where women have resources, options and possibilities of change, I want to reconsider its address in relation to two other factors: its advocacy of a strategy of external cultic participation and internal commitment to the risen and yet-returning Christ, and its address to socio-political situations not of options and choice but of relative powerlessness and few choices, options and resources. Arguably, with some nuancing for social status, that is the situation of most of the women and slaves (and men?) addressed by 1 Peter with regard to honoring the emperor in household and/or civic observances.[96] Their choices seem essentially twofold, either compliance or resistance that brings suffering. The writer of Revelation and, a century later, Tertullian, would urge the latter course of action regardless of the consequence.

How, then, are we to evaluate 1 Peter's strategy of urging civic and domestic submission, including cultic participation, while maintaining inner loyalty to Christ? For situations of few options and little power, is this a 'text of terror' or does the strategy have anything to commend it? On one hand, such a mind–body dualism is hardly a model of the wholeness that feminist scholarship has sought for women. And it can readily be construed as the path of least resistance and easy accommodation in which women and slaves pay the price as victims for the male Christians' social acceptance. Balch and Elliott find some value in its direct address to wives and slaves as moral agents, capable of understanding a rational and theological argument, and as committed Christians.[97] But the rhetorical strategy is not to be confused with its consequences.

James Scott's work on 'weapons of the weak' provides another context for considering the strategy.[98] Scott argues that behind façades of behavioral, symbolic and

94 Dowd, '1 Peter', p. 371.

95 Corley, '1 Peter', pp. 355–57; Tanzer, '1 Pet 3.1–7', p. 498.

96 M. MacDonald (*Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], pp. 195–204) notes some female power to convert husbands.

97 Elliott, *1 Peter*, pp. 552, 540 (slaves); so also Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, p. 90; *idem*, 'Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority: 1 Peter 2.11–3.12', *USQR* 39 (1984), pp. 161–73.

98 J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

ritual acts of conformity imposed by elites, relatively powerless groups perform many anonymous acts of resistance[99] that 'deny or mitigate' elite claims.[100] While public conformity brings necessary material and social benefits ('a good name is conferred in exchange for adherence to a code of conduct'[101]), it also masks and shrouds resistance. Calculated conformity mixes with cautious resistance, routine (yet false) compliance with non-compliance that covers its tracks, 'self-protecting deference' with calculated, prudent and secretive dissent. Public and hidden transcripts interweave. Disguise and 'dissimulation [are] the characteristic and necessary poses of subordinate classes'.[102]

In this context of expressed public deference and masked resistance, 1 Peter's strategy enables the letter's hearers to live, apparently compliantly, in an oppressive context that they cannot change while maintaining an inner commitment that constitutes their identity in ways that contest and supersede restrictive elite categories of 'wife', 'slave' and 'subject of the emperor' (1.1–2.10). The strategy protects that which the letter regards as supremely important, a person's chosen participation in God's yet-to-be-completed saving work (4.7). In sustaining this identity in an eschatological context, the strategy recognizes the empire's overwhelming power while denying its claims through revealing its limits: it is contrary to and ultimately overcome by God's salvific purposes. This 'inner loyalty' and 'false compliance' in cultic observance offers a protest not designed to topple the structures of power, but to enable *hopeful* survival. It provides 1 Peter's women and slave hearers a means of knowing that the ruling power is not ultimate, that it cannot reach to one arena, their hearts, where Christ, not the ruling power, reigns as Lord (3.14) in anticipation of the completion of God's purpose.

This strategy is somewhat akin to the expressions of non-violent resistance outlined in Mt. 5.38–42 and discussed so helpfully by Walter Wink, in which the powerless assert for their own benefit some dignity and humanness in the face of efforts to demean and humiliate.[103] It has some affinity to the reframing of the tax in Mt. 17.24–27 whose payment outwardly seems to express submission to Rome and Jupiter, but which in the acted parable of the coin in the fish's mouth signifies for Jesus' followers, who must pay it, that God's sovereignty will soon end Roman power.[104] Or to move to the twentieth century, Victor Frankl has argued for the importance of the 'inner life' and its 'riches and spiritual freedom' in the survival of Jews in Nazi concentration camps. The 'inner decision' and 'independence of mind', the exercise of the 'last inner freedom', namely a person's 'attitude to existence restricted by external forces', proved an indispensable resource for survival, as did the hope of a future goal.[105]

99 Scott, *Weapons*, p. 304.
100 Scott, *Weapons*, pp. 289–303.
101 Scott, *Weapons*, p. 184.
102 Scott, *Weapons*, p. 284.
103 W. Wink, 'Neither Passivity nor Violence: Jesus' Third Way (Mt. 5.38–42 par.)', in W.M. Swartley (ed.), *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), pp. 102–25.
104 W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), pp. 356–60; *idem*, *Matthew and Empire*, pp. 130–44.
105 V.E. Frankl, *From Death-Camp to Existentialism: A Psychiatrist's Path to a New Therapy* (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1959), pp. 35–69, 72–84.

In very recent times, women in Afghanistan defied male Taliban controls in ways not visible to their oppressors. With a ban on women working and on educating girls, women taught in their homes. Some women defied the imposed dress code of the all-concealing *burka* by wearing lipstick, fishnet stockings and strappy sandals underneath it.[106] In situations where women have few options (and, I repeat, not in situations in which women have real options for a different way of living), 1 Peter's strategy of public, culturally defined submission and honoring while maintaining an internal commitment to Christ as Lord offers an alternative to passive compliance or increased suffering.

In elaborating 1 Peter's command to honor the emperor, we can identify a repertoire of possible, culturally recognized practices. In relation to 1 Peter's culturally assimilationist agenda, the above discussion has raised questions about the ready assumption that its hearers, men and women, slave and free, clearly knew that such honoring did not mean cultic participation. In advocating cultic participation for Christians who reverence Christ as Lord in their hearts, 1 Peter offers not only a means of survival, but also a practice of protest not evident to outsiders that sustains them in a restrictive cultural context until the completion of God's purposes.

106 Carla Power, 'When Women Are the Enemy', *Newsweek*, 3 August 1998, pp. 37–38.

1 Peter 2.11–3.7: Slaves, Wives and the Complexities of Interpretation

James W. Aageson

Setting the Stage

Whether one reads this text with a hermeneutics of submission, of resistance, or of outright rejection, there is little doubt that 1 Pet. 2.11–3.7 brings us face to face with our own ethics – indeed, the ethics of reading and using biblical material.[1] Once these words came to be embedded in the canon of the New Testament and understood as sacred, they also came to have divine sanction that made them – in the wrong hands and used for misguided purposes – dangerous for human well-being, both for slaves and for women in marriage.[2] To put it bluntly, if God's word counseled, let alone demanded, the subordination of slaves and wives (and honoring of wives by husbands), what could authorize Christians to think or act otherwise?[3] In this way, the question of the text's authority and its relationship to other claims of authority, whether social structures of power that manipulate the text to their own advantage or ethical principles that require resistance to the text, is also sharpened. This problem of authority also raises the issue of the reader's responsibility to read the text in its historical and social context, though the contemporary context may be dramatically different. Or to put it even more pointedly, does the reader owe this ancient text anything? And if so, what?[4] These questions have no simple or single answer, yet they illustrate important issues when we think about this text in terms of slavery, gender, authority, and the character of biblical interpretation.

This essay argues that 1 Pet. 2.11–3.7 cannot be transported directly, with or without remainder, into another context as having ethical or theological authority – even where we agree with what we think the text says; as the text itself indicates, cultural analysis of its recipients is critical, if not determinative, for the instructions, commands, and theological claims that it sets forth. To ignore the particular circumstances of Christian communities and individuals today in thinking about these words would be to violate one of the inherent ingredients of 1 Peter, the necessity of

1 Here I include what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls the 'ethics of reading' ('the exegesis of texts') and the 'ethics of scientific valuation and judgment' ('the ethical-moral norms, values, and ideals as well as the criteria of discernment and evaluation'); see *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), p. 196.

2 See Clarice J. Martin, 'The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: "Free Slaves" and "Subordinate Women"', in Cain Hope Felder (ed.), *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), pp. 206–31.

3 This is most apt to be a question that those who interpret the Bible quite literally would ask. Still it is the kind of question that sharpens issues of textual authority and usage.

4 These questions are most pointed among those biblical readers who tend to read 'in front of the text', i.e., more reader-response oriented approaches to texts.

addressing the context of the hearers.[5] This issue is especially significant because slaves and women (wives), two of the community's most vulnerable groups, are used as paradigmatic for other members of the church as it seeks to live in a hostile environment and make its statement to the wider culture.[6] This is a strategic move on the part of the author, and one that raises important interpretive and ethical issues.[7]

I have no desire to exonerate the text of the negative consequences it may have generated, but likewise I have no willingness to presume the right to ignore its context or character. One may reserve the right to reject any textual claim, correctly understood, over one's life and conduct, but those who enter the textual space of 1 Pet. 2.11–3.7 with the intent to engage in the act of reading are obligated, in my view, to make every effort to understand the text in its own historical, social, and symbolic world. Still the more pressing part of this question is, what happens when the textual world and the contextual world of the reader meet, when they confront each other with different values, expectations, and social locations? How does the reader adjudicate conflicting claims? Short of using this text for baldly cynical purposes, serious readers of 1 Pet. 2.11–3.7 will invariably confront this issue and find it increasingly acute as the text moves explicitly into the realm of teaching, preaching, and ethics.

Follow the Example of Christ: Focusing the Issue

One of the critical exegetical debates concerning 1 Peter in the last two decades centers around the work of David Balch and John Elliott. Balch argues that the author of 1 Peter exhorts the letter's recipients to accommodate their behavior to customary domestic expectations in order to silence those in the larger culture who have charged the community members with threatening Roman social order.[8] The purpose and function of 1 Peter is thus accommodationist, motivated by the desire to quiet slander. Conversely, Elliott claims that the letter seeks to console and encourage suffering Christians who live on the edge of social and political life in Asia Minor.[9] Reassuring them of their peculiar identity, the letter seeks to maintain discipline in these communities and separation from the wider culture. Hence,

5 Schüssler Fiorenza appropriately claims that in a critical theory of rhetoric context is as important as text. As she writes: 'What we see depends on where we stand. One's social location or rhetorical context is decisive for how one sees the world, constructs reality, or interprets biblical texts' (*Rhetoric and Ethic*, p. 19).

6 This exemplary or paradigmatic role of slaves and women is emphasized by Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 192, 195, 217; M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), pp. 106–107; John H. Elliott, 'Disgraced Yet Graced: The Gospel according to 1 Peter in the Key of Honor and Shame', *BTB* 25 (Winter, 1995), pp. 166–78 (p. 171); and *idem*, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), pp. 206–207.

7 See below pp. 46–47.

8 David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS, 26; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), p. 119.

9 Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, pp. 148–50.

suffering was not detrimental to the church members but served to make clear the boundaries between themselves and those on the outside.

Neither position can be dismissed out of hand, and though their nuances are more subtle than this description suggests,[10] what is hermeneutically significant about the juxtaposition of these two arguments is that it sharpens the issues of both epistolary purpose and concern for the text's audience. To assert conformity with established household patterns is dramatically different than to exhort and console. What does the contemporary reader hear as the purpose of these words? As a good portion of these texts' interpretive history illustrates,[11] the purpose is not simply a matter of what 1 Peter says but what readers hear it to say and for what purposes they intend to use what they hear.

Balch's position suggests that there is an implied audience beyond the recipients, namely, slanderers who are to be quieted by the community's conformity to accepted domestic patterns. In other words, the letter has an ulterior purpose. By contrast, Elliott suggests that the prime, if not sole, audience is the recipients of the epistle themselves. In this case, the destination of the message is primarily internal. Hence, we must inquire not only about the message of the text, but to whom it is directed immediately and ultimately. These complex arguments, when juxtaposed, can be used paradigmatically to raise wider hermeneutical issues about both the exegetical character of the text and the purposes of contemporary interpreters.

Recently, research focusing on honor and shame in the rhetoric and theology of 1 Peter has gained scholarly attention.[12] Elliott proposes that 'the author of this letter perceived and interpreted this conflict between the Christians of Asia Minor and their detractors as one over honor and shame, grace and disgrace, and in so doing also transposed the issue of honor and shame into a theological key'.[13] Of the features he identifies as characteristic of honor/shame cultures most illustrative for the study of 2.11–3.7 is the observation that males tend very often to represent the honor of the family or group and females tend very often to represent the shame.[14] Although these cultures view women as weaker than males, women have the power to bring disgrace upon the family or group.[15] Consequently, males must be vigilant not to allow

10 Kathleen E. Corley opts rather abruptly for the position of David Balch, '1 Peter', in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures II. A Feminist Commentary* (2 vols.; New York: Crossroad, 1994), pp. 349–60 (p. 350). See the nuanced and mediating position taken by Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 53–54. From an exegetical point of view, both of these purposes may be at work in 1 Peter, but differentiating them helps to focus the critical hermeneutical issues of concern here.

11 Martin, 'Household Codes', pp. 206–31.

12 Barth L. Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* (SBLDS, 160; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998) and Elliott, 'Disgraced Yet Graced', pp. 166–78. See also Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* (SBLDS, 131; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

13 Elliott, 'Disgraced Yet Graced', p. 167.

14 Elliott, 'Disgraced Yet Graced', p. 168. The other three features of honor/shame cultures he identifies are their group orientation, the conflictual character of social relations in these societies, and the role kinship plays. See also Campbell, *Honor, Shame and Rhetoric*, p. 153. Despite the implication of texts such as Sir. 42.12–14, women can also bring honor upon the group under certain circumstances. This can be seen most vividly among women of means and social position.

15 This is still seen on occasion in cultures where wives or sisters thought to have disgraced the family have their apparent disgrace violently avenged by an aggrieved male in the kinship group.

females to shame the kinship group. Broadly speaking, this is the context for 1 Peter's instruction that wives should be subordinate or defer to their husbands and not outwardly adorn themselves. Otherwise, the women threaten to bring dishonor upon the community, and as 'visiting strangers' and 'resident aliens' in a hostile environment – where some wives have apparently become members of the church apart from their husbands – this has important implications for the household of God.[16] As social inferiors, household slaves are also critical in maintaining the honor of the authoritative males in the family and by extension the household of God. In 2.13–3.7, the conduct honorable for those of paradigmatic significance for the community – slaves and Christian wives – is set forth with clarity and directness.[17]

The honor/shame context for understanding 1 Peter's instructions presents interpreters today with a hermeneutical problem; among those for whom this text is Scripture, the problem has theological and canonical considerations as well. How can we who come from cultures shaped by modern notions of individualism – perhaps also sin and guilt – where honor is not normally seen as a limited good gained at the expense of others, make sense of this text,[18] let alone find theological value in it? Moreover, what happens to the function of 2.11–3.7 when it is transported into a modern context where the traditional identification of honor and shame with male and female does not pertain, or is at least challenged by notions of human rights, liberty, and justice? Those who have tried to import these words directly into other contexts have normally done so with little regard for first-century honor/shame dynamics; because of this, the palpable collision of this text's context with the interpreter's context begs for clarification.[19]

Moreover, if 1 Peter addresses a threatened and powerless minority of 'visiting strangers' and 'resident aliens'[20] whereas much of Christianity is today part of the privileged establishment, how does this affect the way these words are heard? When 1 Peter is heard by those with social status, power, and perhaps wealth, and who are not clearly separated from their wider culture by sectarian boundary markers, it invariably will be heard differently than the original audience would have heard it. These words can be used to preserve status at the expense of those addressed, namely, women and the enslaved. Perhaps even more insidiously, oppressed people may internalize the words without reflecting on the dislocation that occurred in moving from one context to another. Indeed, the writer of 1 Peter never could have imagined the power and privilege the church has embodied during much of its history, let alone think the institution would be in existence for 2000 years.[21] And even if one considers the instructions of 1 Peter appropriate to its original context,

16 Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and Rhetoric*, pp. 154–55.

17 Elliott, 'Disgraced, Yet Graced', p. 171.

18 In the modern West, issues related to honor and shame (for example reputation and embarrassment) are certainly part of social and psychological life. See Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies: Triumph over Shame* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), especially pp. 3–20.

19 I take this to be part of what Schüssler Fiorenza is driving at when she calls for a 'double ethic' (*Rhetoric and Ethic*, p. 27).

20 For discussions of this terminology in 1 Pet. 2.11, see Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, pp. 21–58 and Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and Rhetoric*, pp. 99–102. For a counterview, see Moses Chin, 'A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter', *Tyndale Bulletin* 42 (1991), pp. 96–112.

21 For the eschatological view see 1 Pet. 1.4–6, 13, 20; 2.12; 4.5, 7, 17.

their cross-cultural use presumably would never have crossed the writer's consciousness. That this cross-cultural use is an issue at all is primarily a factor of canonization.

These are among the most problematic hermeneutical and ethical issues of reading 1 Pet. 2.11–3.7. And they find the most poignant implications in 2.21: 'For to this you have been called, that Christ also suffered on your behalf and left for you an example so that you should follow in his footsteps'.[22] Here the conduct considered honorable for household slaves, in the face of abuse and unjust suffering, is said to conform to the pattern of Christ.[23] This is the mode of conduct to which 'you' have been called, slaves are told. The exemplary role of Christ's suffering not only validates christologically the instructions given to the slaves, but even more than that it theologizes that conduct.[24] The obedient slave has divine approval (2.20). The linking of the slave's conduct with Christ's conduct sharpens the question of the relationship between the gospel of 1 Peter and the instructions to slaves and wives. If these are not linked inherently or are somehow even in tension, the instructions may be reflective of the writer's analysis of the cultural situation of Christians in Asia Minor rather than derived inexorably from the character of the gospel itself. If so, a different reading of the cultural situation may bring about different instructions on how to live as the church (household of God). It is with these problems and questions that we turn to the text of 1 Peter.

1 Peter 2.11–3.7 in the Context of the Gospel

1 Pet. 2.18–3.7 is normally grouped with the domestic codes (*Haustafeln*) found in the deutero-Pauline traditions,[25] especially Col. 3.18–4.1 and Eph. 5.21–6.9.[26] Unlike the Pauline codes with their paired instructions for husband–wives, fathers–children, and masters–slaves, 1 Peter refers only to slaves and wives–husbands. Still, the important issue in this discussion is not the pre-Petrine or pre-Pauline form of these codes, but the way they appear and function in the context of 1 Peter. For this understanding, the discussion of the gospel that precedes 2.11–3.7 requires examination.

In 1.3–12, the circumstances surrounding the 'new birth into a living hope' are expressed in terms of future inheritance (vv. 3–5), present trials (vv. 6–9), and past revelation (vv. 10–12).[27] Through the resurrection, the Christians have been begotten anew into a living hope (v. 3), into an imperishable inheritance kept in heaven (v. 4), and for salvation ready to be revealed at the end time, all as a result of God's mercy. In the text's temporal perspective, the eschaton is not far off, and in the meantime the community is guarded by the power of God through faith for this salvation to be revealed. Woven through v. 3–5 is a clear proclamation of the

22 See the discussion below, pp. 42–43.

23 Cf. Rom. 6.1–11; 2 Tim. 1.8, 12; 2.3, 9; 3.11; 4.5.

24 As 1 Pet. 3.17 and 4.1 indicate, the theological and christological basis for this is not limited to slaves and wives but is intended for the entire community.

25 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 52–54; Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, p. 1; Martin, 'Household Codes', p. 207.

26 Cf. 1 Tim. 2.8–15; 5.1–2; 6.1–2; Tit. 2.1–10; 3.1.

27 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 105. See also Boring, *1 Peter*, pp. 61–69.

writer's understanding of the 'good news', a message predicated on the expectation of salvation for which the Christians are being protected (cf. 1.9). This expectation gives reason even in the midst of trials to rejoice (v. 5). As Achtemeier writes: 'The point is therefore that despite present suffering which would point to a different attitude, that is, mourning or fear, rejoicing remains the appropriate stance for Christians because of the new realities described earlier.'[28] Yet even more than giving cause to rejoice in the face of trials, the writer ventures an explanation for these trials: to test and prove 'your' faith so that at the revelation of Jesus Christ 'your' faith may result in praise, glory, and honor.[29] The writer thus projects to his audience a way of understanding their suffering without losing hope.

In 1.10–12, the writer makes clear that this future hope now shaping present trials was foretold. The prophets inquired about the grace that now comes to these believers. The spirit of Christ was in them foretelling Christ's sufferings and the glories that would follow. These events have now been announced to 'you' by those sent from heaven and empowered by the holy spirit. As the hope for salvation gives Christians endurance in present suffering, this future hope was also foretold.[30] To undergird their 'living hope', the writer claims that the present proclamation in the midst of suffering and the certainty of salvation are but a realization of that which was revealed among the prophets. In this, the witness of the Old Testament and the testimony of the gospel are united.[31]

In 1.3–12, the writer summarizes the gospel and in so doing brackets the present trials with the prophecies of the past and the salvation to be revealed. This temporal frame will shape coming pastoral and ethical instructions, much of which concerns the conduct and obligations of the Christians living in the present. There is nothing in 1 Peter's gospel that appears to mandate the specific instructions in 2.11–3.7, but everything that follows from this statement is set in the context of being found to have praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus, the call to holiness and honorable conduct follows from the gospel's indicative character.[32] What this means in the circumstances of the churches of Asia Minor occupies much of what follows.[33]

This concern is signaled immediately in 1.13 by διό ('therefore'), which indicates that what follows derives from the message of hope rooted in the gospel announced in 1.3-12. Whether we translate the first two participles in 1.13, ἀναζωσάμενοι ('those prepared for action') and νήφοντες ('those who are sober'), as imperative or descriptive of the new reality of God in Christ,[34] it is clear the force of the entire

28 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 100–101.

29 Boring writes: 'The author sees suffering-for-others as the innermost reality of the universe, the nature of God revealed in Christ, the given existence of all who are "in Christ"' (*1 Peter*, p. 60; see also p. 63).

30 I take the expression εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα ('sufferings coming to Christ') as referring to the sufferings of Christ.

31 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 112–13.

32 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 115.

33 Boring says the Christian imperative is predicated on a view of the 'way things are', and this is spelled out as confession of the historical reality of living in the world sustained by God (*1 Peter*, p. 61).

34 Cf. the NRSV, NAB, and the translation by Achtemeier (*1 Peter*, p. 117).

verse is imperatival: 'set your hope completely on the grace that comes to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'. This focus continues in 1.14–15 as Christians are called not to be conformed to the desires of their former life but rather to be holy as the one who called 'you' is holy. Confirmed by appeal to Leviticus, the writer calls the recipients to lives of holiness.[35] To this point in the epistle, what that means in terms of morality is not clear, but, as Achtemeier argues, the Old Testament claim that Israel is God's chosen people makes them holy and that means being set apart from other peoples (cf. Lev. 20.26).[36] Similarly, in the holiness of God, these Christians are to be separated from their former lives, which probably also means being separated, in some measure, from the surrounding culture. They must conform their lives to their new status as children of the holy one who calls them to a 'living hope'.

In 1.17, God is identified as one who judges impartially, and those who call him 'Father' must conduct themselves with holy and reverent fear. As if to indicate how closely the gospel and Christian behavior are linked, the writer again launches into a recitation of the gospel in 1.18–21. The Christians' changed redemptive status is to result in a changed pattern of conduct, and to that changed pattern the recipients are exhorted to conform. The perfect participle ἡγνικότες ('you have purified') in 1.22 suggests the Christians in Asia Minor have already purified themselves in obedience to the truth; extending this into the community sphere, the author reminds them that the goal of this purification is genuine and mutual love. Further implications are drawn in 2.1 (cf. οὖν, 'therefore'), which makes the striking distinction between loving one another and the evil, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speech that are contrary to their status as newborns who long for the unadulterated milk of God.[37] As the argument progresses, greater and greater specificity regarding appropriate conduct for those born anew comes into view. The discussion is still within the realm of general conduct, yet the text makes clear that this behavior grows out of the gospel of Jesus Christ and is reflective of the Christians' new status.

In 2.4–8, the discussion is sharpened christologically: readers are envisioned as coming to the living stone (Christ) that is rejected by people but elect and precious to God.[38] Whether the opening participle προσερχόμενοι ('those who come to him') is imperative or indicative does not fundamentally change the text's theology and sense of appropriate Christian conduct, but it does affect the text's tone and function. Is it exhortative or is it descriptive of what is already the case among the recipients? Though we need not settle this issue here, three things are important to observe. First, even though the participle may be translated as indicative, the discussion nonetheless

35 See Lev. 11.44; 19.2; 20.7, 26.

36 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 121, and Boring, *1 Peter*, p. 77.

37 Even if Achtemeier is correct to translate the opening participle of 2.1 ἀποθέμενοι, 'after putting off') with a temporal sense and not as an imperative, it is clear the author intends to convey the message that these behaviors are destructive of the community and hence inappropriate. In that way, they also function to exert influence on the conduct of the recipients. Whether the mention of these forbidden behaviors suggests that the Christian community in Asia Minor was subject to these kinds of practices by the pagans is difficult to know (Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, p. 94); but as the text itself indicates, the primary force of these words is directed internally to the household of God.

38 For a comparison of Rom. 9.33 and 1 Pet. 2.6–8 see my discussion in *Written Also for Our Sake: Paul and the Art of Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 61–64.

has an imperatival sense. Second, the indicative/imperative relationship is thoroughly interwoven in 1 Peter and alternates quite naturally. Third, the author is clearly writing to bring the gospel to bear on the life and conduct of the Christians and not simply to reiterate it.

This section of the epistle (2.4–9) contains significant images for the author's sense of the community: in 2.5, 'living stones', 'spiritual house', 'holy priesthood', 'spiritual sacrifices'; in 2.9, 'elect race', 'royal priesthood', 'holy people', and 'God's own people'. From the living stones, the community is built, and it is built into something that is living, spiritual, holy, priestly, elect, and royal. But this community also exists 'in order that you might announce the deeds of the one who called you from darkness into his marvelous light' (2.9). Presumably, the 'deeds' are the saving acts of God in Christ.

Throughout 1.3–2.10, the author consistently draws inferences from the gospel that bear on the life and conduct of the Christian recipients. As conditioned as these inferences are by the writer's perspective and imagination, they are understood nevertheless to follow from the saving act of God in Christ, foretold by the prophets and ready to be revealed at the last time. In light of these past events as well as the events still to come, the author addresses the present circumstances of the church. To this point, he does so to establish the identity of the Christians and their community, to exhort them to a life of mutual love and conduct befitting the gospel, to call them to a life of discipline that does not conform to their former life in ignorance, and to remind them that they are to testify to the deeds of the one who called them out of darkness. As a holy people, they are to separate themselves from their former lives and presumably from the culture that represents that former life. In this sense, they are Diaspora aliens.

Though some may object to this sectarian impulse, there is as yet no hint that the writer has singled out any particular group for specific instructions. The exhortations are directed to the household of God, and they apply to all without distinction.

1 Peter 2.11–3.7 and the Church in the World

The contrast between παροίκος ('resident alien') and παρεπιδήμος ('visiting stranger', 'sojourner') in 2.11 and ἔθνη ('Gentiles') in 2.12[39] signals that the focus is now explicitly on the community in the world. The author's words are directed to church members, but the appeal to good conduct is so that the Gentiles, though they speak evil of Christians, may see this praiseworthy behavior and give glory to God. Now it is clear that good conduct has an ulterior motive. Christians are not to renounce their status as aliens and strangers but, maintaining their identity, to use their exemplary behavior to cause outsiders to glorify God on the day of 'visitation'. Communal identity and behavior are not simply internal matters, but affect the way the community is perceived and the way it testifies to God (cf. 2.9). Having established the identity of the Christians as separate and distinct and encouraged their mutual love (1.3–2.10), the author now addresses the community's conduct toward the wider culture.

39 For discussions of these terms in 2.11 see Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 173–75 and Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, pp. 46–49. Cf. the use of these two terms in Acts 7.6; Eph. 2.19 and 1 Pet. 1.1; Heb. 11.13 respectively.

In 2.13–17, the commands to the community become explicit: be subordinate to every human creature ('on account of the Lord'),[40] whether emperor or governor; by doing good, silence the ignorance of the foolish ('it is the will of God'); as slaves of God live as free people; do not use evil as a cover for freedom; honor everyone, including the emperor; love those in your community; and fear God. What the good behavior identified in 2.11–12 means begins to be elaborated. The call to subordination is placed in the context of obedience to the Lord, and conduct done to silence the foolish is identified as the will of God. The author thereby connects theology with a specific pattern of conduct. Not only does this shift in the discussion strengthen the force of the instruction, but it implicitly asserts the author's knowledge of God's will; this in turn is linked with the conduct claimed to be appropriate for Christians. There is to be no confusion: Christians are to respect human authorities, but where the will of God and human powers conflict, the will of God prevails.[41] On one level, however, the author assumes apparently that at this time (probably late first century) and in this context (Asia Minor) the will of God, the needs of the Christian community, and the work of the human authorities are not entirely incompatible. Hence, the emperor, his agents, and the larger society are to be supported and not resisted, honored and not shamed.

These verses obviously sharpen the epistle's theological problem. How can the writer be so sure about the will of God in terms of specific Christian conduct? And how does the gospel of Christ necessarily lead to these particular behaviors? Certainly, the writer wants Christian conduct to silence the critics and to bring outsiders to glorify God. To do that, Christians are not to give outsiders pretext to attack the church. Whether or not the author intentionally settles for a form of nonthreatening, customary behavior, these instructions do reflect implicitly an assessment of what is in the best interest of the church and what serves to enhance the gospel in those circumstances. Even if the writer could have conceived of a different ethical response to the world in light of the gospel, there seems to be a judgment that this is correct conduct for a Diaspora community in these circumstances. If so, the imperatives in 2.11–3.7 do not follow from the indicative character of the gospel alone, or perhaps even primarily, but also from some claim about the culture and what serves the interests of the church in that context. Given what we know about how church and world interact in other circumstances that would not be surprising. Even if one claims that the author's ethic was based on a reasonable assessment of the church's situation, that is not the same as saying that the ethic of 1 Peter has corresponding value for the church in different circumstances. What is clear is that the writer of 1 Peter is dealing with a complex ecclesiological, theological, and ethical problem: how can the church maintain its peculiar identity and yet engage the wider world faithfully and responsibly?

Moving farther out on this ethical limb, the writer in 2.18–25 addresses household slaves. For the first time the epistle singles out a specific group, albeit as exemplary for the entire community.[42] In all godly fear, household slaves are to be subordinate to their masters, whether good or dishonest. It is to the slaves' credit (χάρις) to

40 This is often translated as 'human institution' (NAB, NRSV) or 'human authority' (REB).

41 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 182–86.

42 See above, p. 38.

suffer unjustly on account of their consciousness of God, and God looks favorably on those who do good and still suffer. In 2.21–25, the example (ὑπογραμμός) of Christ who, though he committed no deceit or sin, suffered unjustly and turned himself over to the one who judges justly, sets the pattern to which slave behavior is to conform.

Achtemeier may be right on one level when he writes: 'The point is therefore not social conformity; the point is to live a life in accord with social custom to the extent that it is possible without compromising their faith, so as not to give more offense than is necessary'.[43] But that conclusion is the end product of the author's theological reflection on Christian slaves and their behavior and, I would argue, it already presumes the reality of the slave's situation in Roman society and the church under duress. For slaves not to subordinate themselves – had they any realistic choice other than subordination – would have had disastrous consequences not only for the slave but for the church as well. The writer certainly knew that. The words of 1 Peter, in my view, are as much an attempt to rationalize and structure the reality of slave life as they are intended to instruct slaves in Christian conduct. In the eschatological horizon that governs the author's theological thinking, entrusting oneself to God is a serious and urgent matter, but apparently it does not extend to seeking to bring God's justice to domestic slave–master relations, or to resisting slavery itself. As with virtually all persecuted minorities, the social sphere over which they had any direct control was largely internal, that is, domestic. Their ability to influence external matters was extremely limited. Hence, 1 Peter's remarks to Christian slaves may not be for social conformity for its own sake, but the situation in which these slaves found themselves circumscribed the author's thinking about the meaning of proper conduct in light of gospel.

The issue of context and purpose surfaces once again in 3.1–2 and 7. The first two verses address the situation of wives married to non-Christian husbands, whereas v. 7 directs instructions to Christian husbands. The first case brings the issue of insider and outsider into bold relief, for in this division of Christian wife and non-Christian husband the internal space of the household is fractured.[44] The line between insider and outsider blurs, and the ability of the wife to maintain her Christian identity threatens the well-being of the entire community. This situation is especially prone to conflict if the husband expects his wife to worship his gods and his gods alone.[45] For the wife to do so jeopardizes her salvation. According to the writer, it is far better for her to be subordinate to her husband in order that without a word – in conduct pure and reverent – she might gain him for salvation. As in 2.12, the goal of this conduct is to cause the non-believing husband, the outsider, to glorify God. In 3.7, the situation is different, as the writer directs his remarks to (presumably) Christian husbands. The problem of insider and outsider is not front and center here. Though reflecting the wider cultural attitude that women are weaker and inferior vessels,[46] the author instructs Christian husbands to honor their wives as

43 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 194.

44 That this is not a broad, sweeping statement pertaining to the relationship between men and women is made clear by the expression τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ('to your own husbands'). The issue is between wives and their own husbands.

45 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 208, 210.

46 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, p. 206, and Boring, *1 Peter*, pp. 124–25.

fellow heirs of the grace of life. Against the Greco-Roman background of honor and shame, this is striking, and it appears to echo the call to mutual love in 1.22.

In 3.1–2 and 7 the critical issue for understanding the instructions to wives and husbands is the matter of insiders and outsiders, church and wider culture. In 2.13–17, 2.18–21, 3.1–2, 3.13–17, and 4.12–19, 1 Peter's ethic of deference to authority, subordination, doing public good, and suffering for the right emerges when Christians engage the non-Christian world. But when the instruction is directed internally, the issues most prominent are holiness (1.15; 2.9), reverence (1.17), mutual love (1.22; 3.8; 4.8), longing for spiritual milk (2.2), abstaining from desires of the flesh (2.11), unity of spirit (3.8), hospitality and service (4.9–11), and discipline (1.13; 4.7). With deceptive simplicity, the author redirects attention from Christian life in the church to Christian life in the world and back again. It is this shifting focus, as the writer seeks to reinforce the community's identity on the one hand and prepare it to engage – perhaps even accommodate – a hostile world on the other, that needs to frame our interpretation and use of this text. This alternating look inward and outward shapes the author's attempt to support the Christians of Asia Minor in their time of distress. And it is this strategy that we readers today must not ignore if we are to grapple seriously with the epistle's theology and ethic.

1 Pet. 3.1 and 3.7 require important translation decisions that (probably) do not affect our understanding of the text's underlying ethic, but clearly do affect the tone and presentation of the instructions to wives and husbands. The participles ὑποτασσόμεναι ('those who accept the authority of/are subordinated to') in 3.1 and συνοικοῦντες ('those who live together') in 3.7 are both preceded by the adverb ὁμοίως ('similarly') and are normally translated with imperatival force;[47] but Achtemeier argues that they should be translated as instrumental: (3.1) 'Similarly you wives, [fulfill your Christian duty] by being subordinate to your own husbands ...' and (3.7) 'In like manner you men [fulfill your Christian duty] by living with the women in an enlightened way ...'[48] The adverb ὁμοίως ('similarly') in these translations does not refer to the instructions that precede immediately (i.e. slaves in 3.1 and wives in 3.7), but to the imperatives in 2.17: honor everyone, love the community, reverence God. The emphasis is on wives and husbands fulfilling their Christian responsibility, not primarily on the commands to be 'subordinate' and to 'live together' as ends in themselves. Whether these be read as imperatives or as instruments to the fulfillment of Christian duty, the implied ethic is essentially the same: wives be subordinate to your unbelieving husbands, and husbands live together with your wives in knowledge.

Wives' inner (a gentle and quiet spirit) rather than outer (braided hair, gold jewelry, fine clothing) adornment is precious before God (3.3–4). As if to substantiate this claim, the author appeals to holy women who in former times deferred to the authority of their husbands, in particular Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him lord (3.5–6). Sarah thus becomes the model of how women are to conduct themselves. They are to defer to their husbands and to find their place in the proper social order to fulfill their duty to God: avoiding conflict and testifying by their good conduct to God's glory. As in the case of household slaves in 2.18–21, the writer undoubtedly

47 See the NAB, NRSV and REB.

48 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, pp. 205–11, 217–19.

understood that to disrupt domestic tranquility was tantamount to threatening imperial order, and that to do so would have grave consequences for Christians.[49]

In the verses that follow 2.11–3.7, the author seeks to support the community in the people's time of trial by encouraging steadfastness (3.13–22; 4.12–19) and maintaining honor, and by so doing putting their accusers to shame (3.16). They are to keep a clear conscience (3.16, 21), live by the will of God (4.2–6), love one another (4.8), and be hospitable as well as good stewards of God's grace (4.9–11). Except for the exhortation to the elders in 5.1–11, these words are directed to the entire community, and they again confirm the importance of recognizing persecution and suffering as the epistle's context. These Christians are in crisis, and the response the writer of 1 Peter gives is more than simply theological, ethical, or exhortatory. It is pastoral. The people need support and sustenance. They need encouragement to remain steadfast and not lose heart. They need discipline to stay the course during this their earthly pilgrimage.

Subordination on Behalf of the Community?

Critical for 1 Peter is the fact that the eschatological horizon for the church is thought to be short.[50] The expectation that Christ's return is imminent can limit the scope for social justice as something valuable in its own right. Present action determines the future reward in the near term, and the expectation of resurrection and eternal life frames existence in the present.[51] As the author writes: 'prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed' (1.13). The interpreter who comes to this text without that same sense of eschatological urgency is apt to react differently to the author's ethic of deference and subordination. When the overriding concern is future salvation, the realities of the present figure differently than when the prospect of eternal life recedes into the distant future, or disappears entirely.

In light of this short eschatological horizon, one might imagine a person's creative attempt to rationalize suffering as a matter of following the example of the suffering Christ. This does not sound appealing to modern, comfortable, secure, people – it may be perverse to some – but we nonetheless can appreciate from afar people's attempt to give meaning to suffering, even by aligning their fortunes with those of their mentor or messiah. Perhaps more difficult for many to accept is the openness to, if not embracing of, suffering for the sake of following the messiah.[52] For some this rings of masochism or false messiahs, but for others it is the cost of discipleship.[53] Because following the way of suffering – the way of the cross – has such

49 In this way, life inside the household, including the household of God, impinges upon life on the outside, life in the larger world. The 'internal' and the 'external' are linked.

50 See above, p. 37.

51 We know from various apocalyptic zealot and revolutionary groups that violence toward forces considered hostile can also be a response among those who have urgent eschatological expectations. Deference is certainly not the only response.

52 I suspect that the Gospel of Mark's radical call for the disciple to follow the way of cross is as compelling as it is offensive. Matthew, in my view, blunts this sharp edge. If this is correct, Matthew's greater appeal is understandable.

53 Here we might think of people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr.

poignant and complex appeal, it is at once dangerous and noble. People can get themselves into trouble thinking and acting in such ways, and they can also express great love and self-sacrifice.

First Peter's appeal to Christ's example in 2.21-25 is problematic because a person revered by the community,[54] and so in a position of authority, promotes these instructions to household slaves and perhaps also implicitly to wives.[55] Beyond the issue of authority, however, this appeal is also problematic because one person is calling upon another to submit to abuse in the name of Christ. To assume freely a position of subordination is something quite different from being advised to do so by another, especially one in authority. In this scenario, the suffering of Christ can be used, perhaps even contrary to intent, to compound oppression. Thereby, Christ's suffering and death become neither hopeful nor freeing in the present age. In short, the pattern of Christ's suffering becomes, either unwittingly or for ulterior purposes, a tool of submission to oppression. It is possible that the writer of 1 Peter sought consciously to build up the identity, discipline, obedience, and hopefulness of persecuted Christians while at the same time he implicitly undermined the well-being of some community members. The final problem with 1 Peter's use of Christ's suffering is that it lays the text open for cynical or even well-meaning interpreters to misuse Christ's example in order to give authority to their own purposes and for their own advantage.[56]

Another important trajectory through the complex interpretation of this text is the relationship of power, status, and social position to the conduct of the community and the individual, as seen both within the world of the text and within its interpreter's context. The church in Asia Minor is a persecuted minority seeking to survive. Its capacity to influence the larger society directly appears limited to providing witness to the gospel in the hope that some people might come to glorify God at the impending revelation of Jesus Christ. When the author's attention is directed to the community's relationship with the wider culture, the call is for conformity to common social expectation in order not to give offense, to reduce the chance of conflict, and to give witness to the gospel. And when the author's attention is primarily internal, the socially inferior and weaker (household slaves and wives) are instructed to subordinate themselves to the socially superior and stronger members of society (masters and husbands) on behalf of a perceived greater good. Husbands, implicitly identified as the 'stronger vessels', are, of course, to give consideration inside the church to their wives.

The church made up of 'visiting strangers' and 'resident aliens' relates to Greco-Roman society as an inferior relates to a superior and so adopts a position of deference. As enslaving and oppressive as this undoubtedly is for the church – and ethically repugnant for those who seek emancipation for the oppressed today – 1 Peter arguably offers a rational and calculated strategy for persecuted people.[57] The

54 This holds no matter who we think wrote the epistle, because in the text's implied world, Peter – one of the authoritative voices of early Christianity – extends the call to follow Christ's example.

55 This issue may turn on the sense of the adverb at the beginning of 3.1. See discussion above, p. 44.

56 See Corley's discussion, '1 Peter', pp. 354–55.

57 Here I think it is necessary to avoid two pitfalls: first, the absolute hegemony of the living over the dead, i.e., extreme forms of second guessing our predecessors from our privileged and comfortable elitist ethics, and, second, naiveté with respect to the text as a contextualized form of political rhetoric.

opposite course could be disastrous. To single out slaves and wives for special instruction, however, puts them in double jeopardy, within both the community and the larger society.[58] We cannot be sure what happened to these women and slaves within the confines of church social and domestic life, but it would be reasonable to think that their social inferiority was strenuously enforced at times by appeals to social propriety, to the community's social well-being, and to christology/theology. In that regard, the ethic of 1 Peter reinforced with a vengeance the ethic of Greco-Roman culture. The countervailing impulse of the text is that Christian husbands are to honor their wives, for these wives too are heirs of the grace of life. In the domestic sphere, this had the possibility for a quite different marital ethic, but one clearly still within a hierarchical social order. Throughout the social matrix of this text, the identity of the community and the preservation of that identity are intimately bound up with the dynamics of status and power, individual and communal ethics, old life and new life in the grace of God, and pastoral and theological support.

When modern interpreters enter this matrix, the social locations, social ethics and purposes of the interpreter overlay and in fact become fused (or con/fused) with the text itself. If modern readers read from either a position of the privileged majority church in a democratic, developed world where persecution is hardly a threat, or the point of view of an antiquated message governing gender relations, the text is apt to produce a dissonant ring. In the former case, the trap may be a sentimentalizing that insulates interpreters from the terror of the persecuted church in Asia Minor (or anywhere else for that matter) and the latter may be an assumption that the struggle for female emancipation is complete. Unsuspecting Christian interpreters are easily entangled in this web of social dynamics, and they lose sight of the freeing message of the gospel which, according to the author, is the message of hope. In fact, it is all too easy to turn what is supposed to be a hopeful message into merely another form of tyranny, when the powerless themselves become the powerful. As already suggested,[59] the theology and ethics of this text seem to be tied up inherently with an assessment of the church's cultural situation; when the cultural situation shifts, a corresponding rearticulation of the gospel must follow if the gospel message is to offer hope and not harm.

A further trajectory through the interpretation of 2.11–3.7 is the process of discerning the precise relationship between the indicative (divine action) and imperative (human response), between theology and ethics. The author weaves these together in complex ways, and it would be a mistake to assume they can be neatly disentangled. On the surface, it seems clear to me that the author sees ethics as deriving from the indicative of the gospel, but on a deeper level I would argue that the ethical possibilities the writer sees as flowing from the gospel are shaped and to some extent circumscribed by the wider culture. That does not mean the author or the community he addresses cannot move beyond the social limitations, but it does suggest that to a large extent the patterns and expectations of the broader culture provide a baseline to which the church conforms or from which it deviates. The writer of 1 Peter tries to cast instructions and imperatives in terms of theology, yet the comments regarding slaves and women do not seem, to me, to derive exclusively

58 Corley makes this point forcefully; '1 Peter', pp. 352–55.

59 See above, pp. 34–35.

from that theology. On the contrary, they appear to flow in good measure from the exigencies of the community's situation as a persecuted minority whose horizon is limited by its eschatological expectation. If this interpretive dynamic is true more generally, the wider cultures in which religious communities find themselves may not only limit their more noble impulses but may also open up new and more hopeful interpretations of the underlying religious message. In the case of the church, that message would be the good news of freedom in Christ. I think this is often the case in church history: new light cast on the gospel is made possible by new developments in the wider culture.

Under the judgment of abolitionist and liberationist rhetoric of the previous two centuries, 1 Pet. 2.11–3.7 stands condemned for its acceptance of slavery and women's subordination. Although these were social realities of first-century Greco–Roman life, modern emancipatory movements struggle against them as violations of human worth and dignity. Ethically astute people who stand against oppressive regimes may reject outright such texts as 1 Pet. 2.11–3.7 as impediments to liberation and justice. But these movements, in part generated by religious people and principles, may also stimulate Christians to rethink what the 'good news' means in the life of church and society, what hope means for the dispossessed and oppressed today. Ethics may lead Christians back to the gospel, armed with new insights about the 'good news' and how that 'good news' of Christ might bring hope to those threatened by hostile powers. In short, the imperative (ethics), whether derived from the church or the wider culture, can lead to a new and fuller understanding of the indicative (gospel). This is also why ethical deliberation and cultural analysis are necessary to the text's overall interpretation and contribution to religious reflection.

A Final Word

The epistle of 1 Peter is a sophisticated attempt to deal with an enduring problem of religious communities: how do these people identify and conduct themselves internally, and how do they engage the wider culture? Jews and Muslims in predominantly Western cultures, for example, know the daily struggle of this reality, as do Christians living in Israel and both Jews and Christians in Arab countries. But it is not only a problem of minority religious communities; even majority communities must deal with how to separate themselves from larger cultural forces that challenge their religious identity and sensibilities. To use Christian terms, what does it mean to be 'in the world but not of it'? 1 Peter deals with its own version of this perplexing question. And it is a question contemporary religious people must also address. Undoubtedly, many different responses will be given by different people and different religious communities.

The task for religious people is to answer that question in a way that appeals to the most noble and humane impulses of their tradition. For Christians, in particular, the goal is to bring to life the freeing grace of God at work in the 'good news' of the incarnate Christ. That 'good news' must not, even unwittingly, be turned into 'bad news'. To do so negates 1 Peter's call to hope, obedience to the truth, and mutual love. Being inside the church ought to make a difference, and it ought to make a difference by making hope a living reality. It may be that the writer of 1 Peter failed

to respond adequately to his own call, but our smugness at his failure may be tempered when we turn our own hand to this same problem. The challenge can be daunting. Yet, engaging 1 Peter as serious readers and as ethically astute interpreters may better equip us for the task.

Sarah Imagery in 1 Peter*

Magda Misset-van de Weg

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds. [1]

In the First Epistle of Peter we find a message for women's ears only: a woman who wishes to find favor in the eyes of God distinguishes herself in quiet, respectful, chaste, modest, gentle, obedient behavior; her true adornment is submissiveness (1 Pet. 3.1–6). At the conclusion of the passage in which women are exhorted to be submissive to (their own) men, examples are given to offer authoritative grounding for the message:

> Wives in the same way
> be submissive to your own men
> so that if any of them do not want to listen to the word
> they may be won over without words
> by the behavior of the wives
> when they see your reverent chaste behavior.
> Your adornment should not be the outward (adorning)
> such as braided hair and putting on gold jewelry and fine clothes
> but the hidden (adorning) of the human being of the heart
> with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit
> that is of great worth in the sight of God.
> For this is the way the holy women in former times –
> women who put their trust in God –
> used to adorn themselves
> by being submissive to their own men
> like Sarah obeyed Abraham
> calling him lord
> whose children you have become
> when you do what is right
> and do not fear any kind of intimidation. (1 Pet. 3.1–6)

The fact that this prescriptive text had a formative and lasting influence on Christian marital ethics and the position and status of women in Christian churches and society, that is, in the Western world, is in itself interesting enough to require further study.[2]

* First published in L.V. Rutgers, *et al.* (eds.), *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 111-26. Reprinted by permission.

1 E. Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible, Part II, Comments on the Old and New Testaments from Joshua to Revelation* (New York: European Publishing Co. 1898), p. 8.

2 For a detailed account of an analysis of 1 Pet. 3.1–6, see M. Misset-van de Weg, 'Een vrouwenspiegel, 1 Petrus 3,1–6', *Proeven van Vrouwenstudies Theologie*, Deel IV (ed. A.-M. Korte *et al.*; IIMO Research Publication 44; Zoetermeer: Meinema, 1996), pp. 145–82.

In this paper, however, the focus of attention will be restricted to the allusion to 'the holy women', and in particular to the reference to Sarah as a model of obedience. The image of Sarah, which is coincident with the image of women resulting from the Petrine text, evokes further questions, not in the least because it does not seem to be congruent with the image of the matriarch in Hebrew Scriptures. I will seek to cast some light on the hermeneutics of the author of 1 Peter: how did he use Scripture, what was he trying to achieve and why did he need his specific image of Sarah?

Ethics and Dogmatics

First Peter contains an ethically oriented strategy constructed as an incentive for first-century Anatolian Christians to persevere and cope in a time of trials and tribulations. They are harassed by hostile outsiders,[3] which in turn seems to have strained the relations inside the Christian communities.[4] Therefore, both winning favorable public attention and increasing group cohesiveness are the essential ingredients of the strategy, which should finally result in establishing more stable relationships and the appeasement of both the outsiders and the insiders. Moreover, Christians, living up to the highest and generally accepted moral principles, would demonstrate Christianity's compatibility with the current social and political system.[5] The rationale for the twofold task is set forth in a 'constant dialectical process between dogmatics and ethics',[6] which characterizes the letter. This means that, throughout the letter, the author promotes a well-defined lifestyle and, at the same time, defines the theological basis for such a way of life – in the author's own words – he 'testifies that this is the true grace of God wherein you stand' (5.12). The main body of the ethical admonitions consists of a code of behavior in conformity with classical Greco-Roman cultural ideas: the so-called 'household code' or *Haustafel*.[7] For the theological

3 The problems and the situation of social marginality of the Christians are expressed and obvious from the beginning, as appears from the address: ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς ... (1.1 and see 1.17; 2.11) and from such statements as: ὀλιγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον [ἐστιν] λυπηθέντες ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς (1.6); Ὁ δὲ θεὸς πάσης χάριτος (...) ὀλίγον παθόντας αὐτὸς καταρτίσει, στηρίξει, σθενώσει, θεμελιώσει (5.10 and see 2.12; 3.13–46).

4 Cf. J.H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, its Situation and Strategy* (London: SCM, 1982).

5 On the subject see D.L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS, 26; Chico, CA: Society of Biblical Literature/Scholars Press, 1981) and his article 'Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority: 1 Peter 2.11–3.12', *USQR* 39 (1984), pp. 161–73, in which he argues that the Petrine household code must be situated in a process of acculturation or progressive adjustment, leading to fusion or assimilation. In the course of such a process, decisions need to be made because social customs cannot be ignored. They must be either confirmed, modified or denied.

6 W.C. Van Unnik, 'Christianity According to 1 Peter', in *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W.C. Van Unnik*, II (NovTSup, 30; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), pp. 111–20, esp. 117; and see E. Lohse, 'Paränese und Kerygma in 1. Petrusbrief', *ZNW* 45 (1954), pp. 68–89, esp. 87–89; J.H. Elliott, 'The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Stepchild: 1 Peter in Recent Research', *JBL* 95 (1976), pp. 243–54, esp. 251.

7 On the Greco-Roman background of the code, see e.g. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*; M.-L. Lamau, *Des Chrétiens dans le monde: Communautés pétrinienne au 1er siècle* (LD, 134; Paris: Cerf, 1998).

underpinning of the ethical strategy the author relies heavily on established Jewish Scriptures and/or traditions.[8]

In 1 Pet. 3.1–6, the third section of the household code (2.11–3.12), a combination of the aforementioned elements is present. Following the exhortations directed toward all members of the Christian communities and the slaves, that is, to be submissive both to civil authorities and masters, the women are exhorted to be submissive to (their own) men. In this section, submissiveness – the key issue of the Petrine household code, except in the exhortation addressed to the men – is typified as a pattern of behavior that reveals the characteristics of inward and outward modesty, respect and obedience. By means of the observation that such behavior is of great price in the eyes of God (3.4), the exhortation is given divine sanction. At the same time, hinting at God's all-seeing eye that can pierce even the most intimate moments of its human objects could function as a disciplinary device.[9] Next, yet another argument to strengthen the exhortation is added. The author holds up the holy women of olden days as models to be followed, because, in his view, they put their trust in God and made themselves beautiful by being submissive to their own husbands. This is, of course, exactly what the author has just prescribed. As a last incentive to adopt a submissive attitude, the author points to Sarah, who, in his understanding, was submissive to her husband Abraham. She obeyed him and called him 'lord'. The argument is completed by underlining the women's (new) identity: Christian women, who are not intimidated by anyone and live according to the highest moral standards, become children of Sarah.

> Wives ... be submissive to your own men
> (...)
> like Sarah obeyed Abraham
> calling him lord
> whose children you have become
> when you do what is right (ἀγαθοποιέω)
> and do not fear any kind of intimidation. (3.6)[10]

Holy Women

The exact identity of the holy women is left open, but the link with Sarah as one of them could be the decisive clue to identifying them. It seems very probable that the

8 1 Peter is strewn with quotations (mostly from the LXX) and allusions. Well known are the 'stone texts' as the christological marker in 2.6–8 (cf. Isa. 8.14; 28.16; Ps. 118.22); the Isaian basis for the theology of atonement (Isa. 52–53); the importance of Hos. 1 and 2 in defining Christianity's new identity as the people of God in 2.1–10, and the use of Ps. 34 (3.10–12) for underlining the ethical admonitions. On the use of the Old Testament in 1 Peter, see especially W.L. Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition in 1 Peter* (WUNT, 2/30; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989).

9 Cf. E.A. Clark, 'Sex, Shame, and Rhetoric: En-gendering Early Christian Ethics', *JAAR* 59 (1990), pp. 221–45, esp. 222.

10 Ἀγαθοποιέω together with cognate terminology, such as ἀγαθοποία, ἀγαθοποίος and the opposites κακοποιέω, etc., is a significant means of promoting such ethical standards. In 3.6, ἀγαθοποιέω encapsulates the preceding admonitions and ideals. On the relation between the Petrine use of the concept ἀγαθοποιέω and its Greek sources, see W.C. Van Unnik, 'The Teaching of Good Works in 1 Peter', *NTS* 1 (1954–55), pp. 92–110.

author did have the four matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah in mind, and singled Sarah out.[11] To anyone even slightly familiar with their stories, depicting the matriarchs as women whose common pattern of behavior was their submissiveness and obedience to their respective husbands must, however, seem questionable. Or so I thought, until I came across such comments as: the holy women 'all exhibited (with persons so hallowed he [the author of 1 Peter] has no need to go into details) precisely that preference for interior to external adornment and that domestic docility which he has been applauding'.[12] Nevertheless, to my mind, the matriarchs can be characterized as women with minds of their own, who, in a nutshell, both complied and rebelled.[13]

Like the author of 1 Peter, I will now focus attention on Sarah and the allusion to Gen. 18.12 (LXX), the only text in Genesis in which Sarah refers to Abraham as 'lord':

> But Sarah laughed
> while saying in herself
> Not yet has this befallen me till now
> but my lord is too old. (Gen. 18.12, LXX)

Admittedly, the allusion to Genesis 18 has been problematized and a number of different explanations have been suggested. It has been argued that calling Abraham 'lord' is introduced quite arbitrarily, and has at most a verbal connection with the thought expressed in 1 Pet. 3.1–6,[14] or that the reference to Sarah is a 'harmless

11 Leaving aside the notorious problem of dating rabbinic literature, it is interesting to see that in Jewish literature these four women are less obviously mentioned as matriarchs than one might assume. For instance, *Gen. R.* 58.4 mentions Eve, Sarah, Rebecca and Leah as matriarchs. The reason for leaving out Rachel might be that the focus is Sarah's burial place: the Machpela cave in Kiriath-Arba (Genesis 23). Rachel was buried near Bethlehem (Gen. 35.19 and 48.7), while Adam and Eve were also buried in the Machpela cave (cf. *B. Bat.* 58.a). In *Cant. R.* 6.4.2 Zilpah and Bilhah are added to the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, which might be due to the fact that the number six is expounded on in *Cant. R.* In *Num. R.* 14.11 Bilhah and Zilpah are called matriarchs but not counted among the matriarchs because Leah and Rachel called them 'handmaidens'. For Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah as the matriarchs, see e.g. *Pesiq. R.* 12.5 and *Tg. Neof.* Gen. 49.26.

12 J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (London: Baker Book House, 1969), p. 131; and see e.g. S. Greijdanus, *I–II Petrus: Korte verklaring der Heilige Schrift met nieuwe vertaling* (Kampen: Kok, 5th edn, 1976), pp. 54–55. For the opposite and also problematic appraisal of the matriarchs, see Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, p. 41: 'in fact the wives of the patriarchs, all untruthful, and one a kleptomaniac, but illustrate the law, that the cardinal virtues are seldom found in oppressed classes.... Whilst we drop a tear at the tomb of Sarah, we cannot recommend her as an example to the young women of our day, as she lacked several of the cardinal virtues. She was undignified, untruthful, and unkind to Hagar. But our moral standard differs from that of the period in which she lived ... Sarah probably lived up to the light that was in her.'

13 For some examples from a host of publications on the subject of Sarah and/or the other matriarchs, see: F. Van Dijk-Hemmes, 'En Sara lachte', *Wending* 11/12 (1981), pp. 684–91; A Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985); E. Fuchs, 'The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in Jewish Myth and Hebrew Bible', in A.Y. Collins (ed.), *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (Chico, CA: Society of Biblical Literature/Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 117–36; L. Teugels, '"A Strong Woman Who Can Find?" A Study of Characterization in Genesis 24, with Some Perspectives on the General Presentation of Isaac and Rebekah in the Genesis Narratives', *JSOT* 63 (1994), pp. 89–104.

14 F.W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 3rd edn, 1970), p. 156.

in the style of midrashic paradigms for biblical women figures' ('harmloser Hinweis im Stil midraschartiger Paradigmen auf biblische Frauengestalten'),[15] or that the 'formative significance is kept largely to providing the unit with punctuation'.[16] Many refer to the rabbis who, in their opinion, found in Genesis 18 a demonstration of Sarah's obedience to Abraham,[17] or used Gen. 18.12–13 to emphasize the importance of a peaceful and harmonious relation between husband and wife, which ties up with the Greco-Roman ideals concerning the household, represented in 1 Peter.[18] Partially in line with this, it is stated that Sarah could function as a prime example, because Jewish tradition qualified Sarah as one of the holy women, as the mother par excellence of the chosen people and the mother of the proselytes.[19] The example of Sarah is also viewed in the light of interpretations by Philo and Josephus, who were embarrassed by some details in the Abraham/Sarah stories; each by using his own methodological way depersonalized Sarah, thus distancing her from womanhood or simply transforming her role and turning her into a proper Hellenistic wife. This is a procedure that might be recognized in 1 Peter.[20] Furthermore, the reference to Sarah is considered in the light of the general belief of antiquity that the use of *paradeigmata* (examples of virtuous behavior) to teach practical ethical behavior was more effective than logical or physical force.[21] Still others maintain that the rationale for the reference to Sarah is to be found in the thematic connection between the context of Genesis 18 and the context of 1 Pet. 3.1–6.[22]

Apart from those scholars who concentrate only on the function (punctuation, etc.) of the references to Sarah, these comments show that a large number of commentators consider the allusion to Genesis 18 to be so problematic that at least some kind of explanation is required. Some of their suggestions will now be taken up in order to carry them a step further, first, the one concerning the importance of the context

15 N. Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief* (EKKNT, 21; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), p. 145.

16 Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, p. 66; see Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, p. 146.

17 Thus, e.g. L. Goppelt, *Der Erste Petrusbrief* (KEK, 12/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 8th edn, 1978), p. 219: 'Bei Sara erwies sich die Unterordnung durch ihren Gehorsam.... Dies wird durch eine nicht gerade treffende Stelle aufgewiesen, die jedoch auch von den Rabbinen in diesem Sinne ausgewertet wurde'; and cf. K.H. Schelkle, *Die Petrusbrief: Der Judasbrief* (HTKNT, 13; Freiburg: Herder, 2nd edn, 1964), p. 90 n. 1; M. Küchler, *Schweigen, Schmuck und Schleier: Drei neutestamentliche Vorschriften zur Verdrängung der Frauen auf dem Hintergrund einer frauen feindlichen Exegese des Alten Testaments im antiken Judentum* (NTOA; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), pp. 70–72.

18 Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, p. 104.

19 E.G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2nd edn, 1983).

20 D. Sly, '1 Peter 3.6b in the Light of Philo and Josephus', *JBL* 110 (1991), pp. 126–29. For some examples of how Sarah functions in Philo's works, see *Cher.* 41 (Sarah as generic sovereign virtue); *Ebr.* (Sarah as Virtue greater than the species, the motherless principle of things, who had no part in female parentage, but was born of the Father, the cause of all things); *Mig.* 126; *Congr.* 22, 72, 154, 156; *Spec. Leg.* ii.54 (Sarah signifying sound sense, knowledge, the fruitful mind), etc.

21 K. O'Brien Wicker, 'Mulierum Virtues (*Moralia* 242E–263C)', in H.D. Betz (ed.), *Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (SCHNT, 4; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), pp. 106–34, esp. pp. 110–11.

22 For example, Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, p. 146, and M. Kiley, 'Like Sara: The Tale of Terror Behind 1 Peter 3:6', *JBL* 106.4 (1987), pp. 689–92.

of Gen. 18.12 for understanding the reference to Sarah, and second, the one regarding the link with Jewish exegesis of Scripture.

The Abraham and Sarah Cycle

The author of 1 Peter was also a reader.[23] He read the Hebrew Scriptures, read them for his purposes, found meaning in them, and his interpretations found expression in his letter. His repeated appeals to various texts make this abundantly clear. Besides, the extremely concise reference to Sarah seems to indicate that he assumed that his readers would be familiar with the Genesis narratives featuring Sarah. The question is, however, whether and why the author might also have presumed that his readers would not fail to recognize his image of Sarah, and could even rely on their knowledge of the pervasive image of Sarah as a submissive wife in Genesis. By means of a short overview of the context of Gen. 18.12, I shall corroborate my view that this is hardly likely because the image is not obvious at all.

Two main themes dominate the Abraham–Sarah cycle (Gen. 11.26–25.11): the promise of land and the promise of progeny; they were to become a great nation.[24] The fulfillment is a long time coming and repeatedly threatened, but, every time God intervenes and takes away doubts and threats, so it could well be said that promise – threat/doubt – divine intervention/affirmation becomes a pattern in the lives of Abraham and Sarah.

Sarah's role is, of course, mainly connected with the promise of children. However, doubt is a major factor from the start, because the first we are told about Sarai is that she was barren and had no child (Gen. 11.30). Abram takes her to Canaan, but when they are confronted with a famine they move on to Egypt. Abram, who is afraid that the Egyptians will kill him and take his beautiful wife, asks her to say that she is his sister and thus save his life. It is unclear whether she complies, because Pharaoh asks Abram, 'Why did *you* say, She is my sister?' (12.19, LXX).[25] God sees to it that Sarai is returned to Abram, who prospers because of her. The promise is renewed (13.14–16), Abram settles by the Oaks of Mamre and, because Sarai has not borne her husband a child, Abram suggests that Eliezer of Damascus should become his heir. But God said, 'This one shall not be your heir' (15.4, LXX). Sarai then takes action. She gives her maid Hagar to Abram, who 'obeyed (ὑπακούω) Sarai's wish (command) ... went in to Hagar and she conceived' (16.2–4, LXX). Sarai feels threatened by Hagar and demands that God judge between her and Abram. Abram tells her to do what is good in her eyes. Sarai then afflicts Hagar, who flees from her, but Sarai's act is sanctioned by God's messenger when he tells Hagar to return to her mistress and be humiliated by her. The son, Ishmael, is born, but he will not be counted as Abram's seed to whom the land of Canaan will be given as an everlasting possession (17.7–8). He will not be the son with whom God will establish a covenant (17.19–21). Instead, the promise is repeated and

23 For a thorough and clear exposition of this theoretical subject, see B. Cozijnsen, 'A Critical Contribution to the *Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti*', in Rutgers, *et al.* (eds.), *The Use of Sacred Books*, pp. 79-109.

24 Gen. 12.1–3, 7; 13.15–17; 15.4ff; 17.2–16; 18.10, 14, 18; 21.10, 12; 22.17–18.

25 There is general agreement that the Petrine author made use of and quotes from the LXX.

reinforced by a covenant between God and Abram and his name is changed to Abraham.

> For I have made you a father of many nations
> and I will increase you exceedingly
> and I will make you into nations
> and kings shall come forth from you. (Gen. 17.5–6, LXX)

> Sarai shall no longer be called Sarai, but Sarah is her name, and God said:
> I will bless her
> and I will give you a child out of her
> and I will bless him
> and he shall be nations
> and kings of nations shall come forth from him. (Gen. 17.16, LXX)[26]

Thereupon Abraham laughs and wonders in his heart how a 100-year-old and a 90-year-old shall produce a child.

In Genesis 18 three men visit Abraham who is sitting at the entrance of the tent (καθημένου αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς). After Abraham has shown himself to be the perfect host, they ask him where his wife is. When Abraham replies that she is right there in the tent, 'he' says that Sarah shall have a son. Sarah, who has taken Abraham's place at the entrance of the tent (Σάρρα δὲ ἤκουσεν πρὸς τῇ θύρᾳ τῆς σκηνῆς), and for whom the message – 'Sarah shall have a son', not 'your wife shall have a son' – was intended, is indeed the one who reacts.[27] As did her husband before her, she too laughs, and wonders about their age. God asks Abraham why Sarah laughs, but it is again Sarah who answers. She denies that she laughed, and God replies, 'It is not true, you did laugh!'[28]

Once again Sarah is taken from Abraham, this time by Abimelech, king of Gerar. In this extended repetition of the Egypt episode, it is again God who intervenes. Sarah is returned to her husband, together with flocks and herds, servants and maids (Genesis 20). Finally the son, Isaac, is born.

> Abraham called the name of his son
> (...)
> Isaac.

26 There is a striking difference between the LXX and the MT. The MT reads
I will bless *her*
She shall become nations
Kings of peoples shall be of *her*.
Transl. from M.Ph. Korsak, *At the Start: Genesis Made New* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) (my italics).

27 On the repetition of the promise to Sarah, see also B. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1934, reprinted, New York: Ktav, 1974), p. 445: 'Abraham braucht sich nicht zu äussern, weil die Verkündigug für ihn keine Neuigkeit ist. Aber Sara hat sie noch nicht aus fremdem Munde gehört, und wie mit der Erhöhung durch die Änderung ihres Namens soll sie auch darin Abraham gleich gestellt werden. Nicht diesem ... sondern ihr wird jetzt die Geburt eines Sohnes verkündet ... und es ist so eingerichtete, daß sie es hören soll und kann, Ihre Aufnahme der Botschaft ist das Gegenstück zu der Abrahams.'

28 The name of the son Isaac is thus linked to the laughter of both his parents.

(...)
Sarah said, the Lord has made laughter (γέλωτα) for me!
for all that hear will rejoice with me (συγχαρεῖταί μοι)! (Gen. 12.3–6, LXX)

Sarah, who again or still feels threatened by her maid, and especially by her son Ishmael, secures Isaac's inheritance by demanding that Hagar and her son be cast out. Abraham objects because of his son Ishmael, but God tells him:

Whatever Sarah says to you
listen to her voice. (Gen. 21.12, LXX)

After the last threat to the son's existence on a mountain in the land Moriah, which ends with a confirmation of the promise that Abraham's seed will be blessed and increase like the stars of the skies, Sarah dies at the age of 127. Abraham buries Sarah

in the double cave (Hebr. Machpelah) of the field
which is opposite Mamre (that is Hebron)
in the land of Canaan. (Gen. 23.19, LXX)

From the Abraham–Sarah cycle a picture emerges of a beautiful and strong woman who is of great value to her husband. He prospers because of her, and she bears him the son of the promise. She is a woman who takes initiatives and fights for that to which she thinks she and her son are entitled and finds God on her side, who tells her husband to listen to her. Although much could be said about Sarai/Sarah as a stereotypical narrative figure, subservient to the figure of Abraham, it can also be argued that Sarah's obedience or submissiveness is not a thematic issue in the Abraham–Sarah cycle at all. Abraham, on the contrary, is depicted twice as one who listens to Sarah or is told by God to listen to her (Gen. 16.2; 21.12).[29]

At this point it can also be established that when Sarah – while speaking in herself – refers to Abraham as 'my lord', she merely uses a conventional formula, which does, of course, reflect proper respect for her husband as well.[30] The narrative function of 'my lord' in Genesis 19, however, is not one of submission, nor is the

29 For expositions of Abraham's obedience to Sarah, sanctioned by God, sometimes (strategically) linked with Sarah's identity as a prophetess, see *Gen. R.* 47.1: 'R. Aha said: "Her husband was crowned through her, but she was not crowned through her husband". The Rabbis said: "She was her husband's ruler. Usually the husband gives orders, whereas here we read, *In all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice*" (Gen. XXI, 12)'; and see *Gen. R.* 52.5; *Exod. R.* 1.1; *Deut. R.* 4.5; *Sanh.* 69b; *Meg.* 14a; and *t. Sot.* 5.12. Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.217 and Philo, who states in *Cher.* 9 and *Congr.* 63, that the wise Abraham was exhorted to obey (ὑπακούω) the words spoken by Sarah, because it is advantageous and necessary to listen to the voice of Virtue. In Philo's allegories Sarah is depersonalized, but this does not necessarily preempt a positive image.

30 There are numerous instances of the address κύριος and the Hebrew equivalent *adon*. See Gen. 19.2; 23.6; 31.35 (Rachel addresses Laban); Gen. 33.8 (Jacob addresses Esau); Gen. 42.10; Exod. 32.22; Num. 12.11 (again, brother addresses brother); Judg. 4.18 (Jael addresses Sisera). For the repeated and customary address κύριος and κύρια, see also *2 En.* 71.1; *LAE* 1–6; 3.1; 5.1–2; *T. Abr.* Rec. A 3.5; 6.1–6.

pericope narrating the visit of three men to the couple who have pitched their tents at Mamre about Sarah's obedience to Abraham.

The conclusion seems justified that the images of Sarah in Genesis and 1 Peter do not harmonize and that it is difficult to imagine that the readers of 1 Peter found the reference to Sarah as obvious as one might think. This does not mean that the author of 1 Peter did not refer to the Abraham–Sarah cycle, but it raises the question of the author's hermeneutics and the reader's disposition to recognize and accept his procedure, to which I will now attempt to find the answer.

1 Peter and Jewish Tradition

Many commentators, basing themselves on Strack–Billerbeck (Str–B, III, p. 764), add or explain that the Petrine author's (awkward) interpretation of Genesis 18 is based on the misogynist exegesis of the rabbis who expounded Genesis 18 as demonstrating Sarah's obedience to Abraham. Strack–Billerbeck, however, mention only one parallel, from the *Midrash Tanhuma* on Genesis 24, which reads:

> And Abraham was old, well stricken in age (Gen. 24.1)
> (...)
> R. Joshua the son of Nahmani said: 'Men become old prematurely because of four things: fear, grief caused by children, a wicked wife, and wars'.
> (...)
> We read about what transpires because of a wicked wife, in the verse:
> *It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods* (1 Kgs 11.4)
> However, Abraham's wife honored him and called him *my lord,* as is said: *And my lord is old* (Gen. 18.12)
> Concerning her Scripture states: *A Virtuous woman is a crown to her husband* (Prov. 12.4). Hence, it is written of him: *And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things* (Gen. 24.1).[31]

In his endeavor to search for Jewish traditions in which Sarah's obedience is explicit and might have been the source of inspiration for the author of 1 Peter's image of Sarah, F. Manns draws attention to an additional passage in the medieval *Yalqut Shim'oni Wayyera*, which reads:[32]

> Sarah listened
> Hence we learn that women are obedient.

Striking though the parallel from *Midrash Tanhuma* may be, one (late) rabbinic parallel does not constitute proof positive of the use of an exegesis of 'the rabbis'.

31 Transl. from S.A. Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu: An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu with an Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1996), p. 151. According to Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma*, p. xii, the earliest manuscript of the midrash was produced in Babylon and completed in the late eighth or the ninth century. The translated version was printed in Vienna in 1863.

32 F. Manns, 'Sara, modèle de la femme obéissante: Ètude de l'arrière plan juif de 1 Pierre 3, 5–6', *BeO* 26/140 (1984), pp. 65–73, esp. 69.

One additional parallel cannot make a case for a tradition in which Sarah's obedience was expounded either, nor can these two parallels establish conclusive proof that the author was inspired by an exegetical tradition of Scripture. Thus, the view that before the Christian era a tradition was known in which Sarah's obedience was expounded by the rabbis cannot be substantiated, nor can or should these parallels be allowed to serve as evidence of a misogynist rabbinical exegesis as the background of 1 Peter.

Similarities between Jewish and Greco-Roman marriage ideals cannot be disputed. However, the fact that Sarah, for a variety of reasons, is often lauded and presented as a model, both positive and negative, of many kinds (such as virtue, wisdom, prying) cannot make the case for (a tradition of) Sarah as an example of the submissive wife within the context of Jewish marriage ethics.[33]

Even though Jewish traditions behind 1 Pet. 3.5–6 cannot be identified, the question of the author's affinity with hermeneutical traditions behind or principles of interpretation of the Sarah–Abraham cycle still remains to be examined. Common ground between the author of 1 Peter and exegetical methods current in Judaism might indeed be inferred on the basis of the description of the latter by a number of scholars. They claim that it is an important characteristic of Jewish exegesis that Scripture is related to the life and needs – religious or otherwise – of the community. Through *mythos* and *ethos* (*haggadah* and *halakhah*) existing concerns were addressed. This presupposes a dynamic view of Scripture, which allows for transposition, adaptation and reinterpretation, so that new dimensions and significance can be given (more or less) to authoritative stories. Answers can be found to vital questions, in particular questions of identity and lifestyle, such as 'who are we and what are we to do?',[34] questions which are also the core of the problems of the addressees of 1 Peter. Thus, the author of 1 Peter may have taken

33 Again, leaving aside the notorious problem of dating rabbinic literature, see for examples of Sarah associated with a number of qualities, such as beauty: *Gen. R.* 40.5 and cf. *Meg.* 15a, *B. Bat.* 58a; virtue: *Num. R.* 18.21; modesty: *Gen. R.* 53.9, *B. Mes.* 87b; virtue and righteousness: *Gen. R.* 47.1 and 48.20: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, never condescended to converse with a woman save with that righteous woman', *Num. R.* 14.11 and cf. *Cant. R.* 11.4; chastity: *Pesiq. R. Kah.* 11.6; *Lev. R.* 32.5; *Cant. R.* 4.121; piety and good deeds: *Gen. R.* 53.3 and 5. For Sarah as a model of wisdom, see also: Philo's *Abr.* 93 and 1 QApGen col. xx; of beauty: *Jos. Asen.* 1.1,5. But see *Gen. R.* 45.5 and *Deut. R.* 6.11: 'R. Levi said: "Women possess the four following characteristics: they are greedy, inquisitive, envious and indolent.... Whence do we know them to be inquisitive? For it is written, *And Sarah heard in the tent door,* that is, she was eavesdropping on the angel.... Whence do we know that they are querulous? [For it is written,] *And Sarai said unto Abram: My wrong be upon thee ...*".'

34 Cf. M. Calloway, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* (SBLDS, 91; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); D. Dimant, 'Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha', in M.J. Mulder (ed.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1988), pp. 379–419; M.D. Herr, 'L'Herméneutique juive et chrétienne des figures bibliques à l'époque du deuxième Temple de la Mishna et du Talmud', in I. Gruenwald, S. Shaked and G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity, presented to David Flusser on the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), pp. 100–109; and see L. Teugels, 'Midrasj in, en, op de bijbel? Kritische kantekeningen bij het onkritische gebruik van een term', *NTT* 49 (1995), pp. 273–90 and *eadem*, 'Dochter van Farao, schoonmoeder van Mohammed: Hagar in de Joodse traditie', *Jota* 7/28 (1995), pp. 11–19.

vital problems of early Christianity as a hermeneutical principle and resignified, among others, the Abraham–Sarah cycle to meet these concerns.[35] This point will be further elaborated, but first, and in line with the approach of Sly and Wicker (see nn. 20 and 21), another literary convention will be taken into consideration, that is using historical or mythical figures as models.

Reference to a historical or mythical example, by conflating stories, and/or turning characters of (biblical) stories into models or examples to be imitated, was well known and extensively used in the ancient world. The same applies to allusions that introduced a pattern of motifs. Such an appeal to the past could create a sense of belonging to a community and of being part of a history that transcends immediate experiences of, for example, conflict, difference and division. At the same time it could also function as a device to justify the authority and the exercise of power by those who possessed it, reconcile others to the fact that they did not and construct subjects who conformed to that which was demanded.[36] The author of 1 Peter seems to make ample use of this rhetorical strategy to implant the Greco-Roman οἶκος-ideology in the form of his household code, the code of practice that was to function as a tool for the purpose of putting the Christian households (i.e. the Christian communities) in order. For instance, he uses central moments of Israel's history and identity to establish the identity of the Christians who, as God's own people, his holy elect, his holy nation, must excel in good works (ἀγαθοποιεῖν).[37] Slaves, following the example of Christ, should be submissive even when treated harshly and unjustly; women, like Sarah, must be exemplary, submissive wives.[38] Furthermore, a closer look at the dogmatic or kerygmatic part of 1 Peter, the prelude to the household code, shows that the allusion to Sarah is embedded in a whole range of allusions to the foundational cycle of stories featuring Israel's patriarch and matriarch.

35 Although this cannot be substantiated, the author of 1 Peter may have been embroidering on the theme of Sarah's barrenness, which has been extensively reworked/resignified to meet the concerns of the Jewish people. He may have been familiar with the use of the barrenness stories as e.g. signs for the vindication of the humiliated and a paradigm for the future. In Second Isaiah (49.19–21; 51.1–3; 54.1–3), for instance, the question of identity in a desolate period of exile is addressed and answered with the story of how a whole nation descended from an old man and a barren woman by confirming their identity as children of the promise. Israel is thus reminded that its present condition is not hopeless, because it could not be an obstacle for their God; the story of how he had overcome Sarah's barrenness was evidence of that. Just as God created Israel out of Abraham and Sarah, so he will create Israel anew out of a few exiles (see *Gen. R.* 77). Cf. Calloway, *Sing, O Barren One*, esp. pp. 61 and 137.

36 E.A. Clark, 'Ideology, History, and the Construction of "Woman" in Late Ancient Christianity', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), pp. 155–84, esp. 161–62.

37 On the subject of Christianity's appropriation of Israel's identity see G.G. Stroumsa, 'The Christian Hermeneutical Revolution and its Double Helix', in Rutgers *et al.* (ed.), *The Use of Sacred Books*, pp. 9–28, and cf. Herr, 'L'Herméneutique juive et chrétienne', p. 108, who concludes that Christian hermeneutics of biblical figures 'est évidemment non une explication mais une projection des idées chrétiennes de l'époque ... et ce n'est que par cette herméneutique que l'église pouvait essayer de prouver son identité de people éluet devrai Israël'.

38 The accentuation of Christian marriages as adhering to higher standards of morality than the pagan ones remains an important aspect of Christian apologetic writings of the second and third centuries. Incidentally, such a claim is wrongly used, up until this day, by some scholars who cling to the erroneous view of Greco-Roman society as a decadent, debauched world. See e.g. Th.J.M. Naastepad, *De Twee Petrusbrieven: Verklaring van een bijbelgedeelte* (Kampen: Kok, 1991), p. 21.

The construction, or rather the re-construction, of the image of Sarah is embedded in a pattern of motifs that calls Genesis to mind, with the reference to Sarah as the apogee, the more precise marker, or the sign, identifying the Abraham–Sarah cycle. The themes or motifs which seem to have been used to draw an analogy between the situation of the addressees and the story of Israel's founding father and mother are the following:

The Abraham–Sarah cycle starts with their election from the nations, when God calls Abraham to leave his country, representing, of course, the calling, the election and the beginnings of the history of Israel. The Christians in 1 Peter are also introduced and referred to as an elect and chosen people (1.2; 2.9; cf. 5.13), who are 'called' (1.5) to a new faith, a new life, new beginnings. Like Abraham and Sarah they have to distance themselves from time past. 'Now' as πάροικοι and παρεπίδημοι,[39] they must turn away from the traditions of their former fathers:

> conduct yourselves reverently
> during the time of your stay here in a strange land,
> knowing that you have not been ransomed with perishable things
> with silver or gold
> from your former futile way of life
> inherited from your forefathers. (1 Pet. 1.17–18)[40]

The situation of a new beginning is further outlined when the author refers to the addressees as newborn or born-again children (1.3–23; 2.2). They are obedient; they need to grow (1.2–3,14–17) and to be built (2.5). Those who are called from darkness into light, who were not God's people, are now his people (2.10).

Finally, the recurring theme of obedient children, hope and holiness, in both the kerygmatic and the ethical sections of the letter,[41] may be reminiscent of the theme in Genesis 18 (and 17) in which the promise for the future resounds, and hope, which transcends the expectations of this world, is awakened for God's elect and holy.

Conclusion

The use or insertion of Hebrew Scripture in 1 Peter is an important part of the signifying process meant to shape the minds of the Anatolian addressees. In this process, the quotations, allusions and references to the Hebrew Bible intersect with several other textual surfaces, such as dogmatic expositions and an ethical code of Greco-Roman origin. The author's hermeneutics of Scripture seems to be predominantly determined by social, political and ideological concerns and objectives, which, *mutatis mutandis*, mediated the actualization of the Abraham–Sarah cycle and

39 For the theme of παροικία in the Abraham–Sarah cycle, see Gen. 12.10; 15.13; 17.8; 20.1; 21.23–34; 23.4. The remark made by Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, p. 42, that the terms πάροικος and παρεπίδημος were standard legal terms and immediately intelligible as such has been duly noted, but does not necessarily exclude an allusion to Genesis.

40 On the subject, see W.C. Van Unnik, 'The Critique of Paganism in 1 Peter 1.18', in E.E. Ellis and M. Wilcox (eds.), *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), pp. 129–42.

41 Cf. esp. 1 Pet. 1.3–5, 13–21; 3.5–15.

resulted in his image of Sarah. With a view to the insiders, not only his Sarah, but Sarah the matriarch was needed, together with the holy women of old, to situate women's submissiveness within the framework of a sacred tradition. On the one hand, a legitimizing final touch was thus added to the exhortation, while on the other hand, for apologetic purposes in view of the outsiders, Christianity was lent the profile of inheritors of old and revered traditions.[42] Ramsey Michaels has aptly remarked that the author of 1 Peter failed to capitalize on images of Sarah from certain (Hellenistic) Jewish traditions, such as Philo's image of Sarah as 'paramount virtue'.[43]

The real sting in the tail of the Petrine author's exegesis of Genesis 18, resulting in his image of Sarah, is its canonization and the consequences thereof for the lives of too many women for too many ages to come. Today, however, women have put 'honest doubt' on their agenda, and just as it can be observed how the author of 1 Peter was led by social, ecclesiastical and political concerns, keeping up with the times, it can now be observed that many women (and men), led by exactly the same concerns, do not remain behind the times and defy the Petrine message. And, who knows, maybe, just maybe, the Anatolian women too drew their own images and conclusions and, taking up the author's suggestion after all, followed the example of Sarah, and laughed.

42 Cf. e.g. M.R. D'Angelo, 'Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women's Heads in Early Christianity', in H. Eilberg-Schwartz and W. Doniger (eds.), *Off with Her Head! The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 131–64 (24).

43 J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC, 49; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), pp. 165–66.

Feminist Theologies of Suffering and Current Interpretations of 1 Peter 2.18–3.9

Betsy J. Bauman-Martin

Suffering is real. We are surrounded by it, at home and elsewhere. Some 1.4 to 1.9 million children in the US are the victims of abuse every year, while, worldwide, 40,000 children die *every day* due to lack of medicines.[1] Stories from Bosnia, Chechnya, Iraq and Rwanda remind us of the staggering incompleteness of the kingdom of God. I began research for this paper on 10 September 2001 and was vividly reminded the following day of how suddenly suffering arrives. On that day, thinking, feeling human beings who had suffered injustice brought it forcefully and maliciously into the lives of other thinking, feeling human beings.

For centuries solutions to evil and suffering centered around the Augustinian and Irenaean theodicies. But in the last few decades, the issue of suffering has been taken up rather fiercely by feminist scholars. This new focus is primarily the result of two factors: first, women often suffer in ways specific to their sex – rape, forced pregnancy, spousal abuse, forced prostitution, institutional humiliation, etc.; and second, Christianity has consistently associated women with suffering, blaming them for the entrance of sin and suffering into the world, and legitimating the oppression of women by valorizing their suffering.[2] To resist this totalizing discourse, mainstream Christian feminists have come to identify nearly all suffering as the result of oppression, and have taken on an attitude of *anti-suffering* – the idea that all suffering is wrong and the insistence on the elimination of suffering in our lives.[3]

While this (predominantly Western Christian) feminist position is a necessary corrective of previous patriarchal approaches, such a standpoint cannot serve adequately as a model for constructive suffering theologies for the following reasons: (1) it emphasizes success and relief from suffering (even the intervention of God) to such a great extent that it ignores the millions of women who may not have hope for liberation, but must find ways to live constructively and meaningfully with suffering; (2) it does not take into account historical and cultural differences when interpreting and constructing theologies of suffering and thus universalizes the meaning of a suffering experience and *prescribes* universal responses; and (3) such a feminist theory contributes to the disconnectedness of feminism because it remains out of touch with women's experiences that are generally more complex and

1 Kristine M. Rankka, *Women and the Value of Suffering* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), p. 1.

2 Rankka, *Women and the Value of Suffering*, p. 7.

3 Most feminists and others who study the problem of evil make a distinction between the suffering caused by natural evil (the evil of natural phenomena such as tornadoes, disease, etc.) and that caused by moral evil (the evil of human beings against each other). This paper discusses the mainstream feminist attitude toward the suffering produced by moral evil: suffering caused by oppression, abuse, greed, ignorance, etc.

ambiguous than feminists perceive or at least portray. This paper will discuss the shortcomings of popular feminist theologies of suffering, will show how their attitudes toward suffering contribute to the misinterpretation and misuse of usable texts such as 1 Pet. 2.18–3.9, and will argue for a new kind of feminist suffering theology that emphasizes agency and autonomy. The meanings of the suffering of women should always be created personally and contextually. The goals of relief and means of resistance ought to be decided by the sufferer herself who best understands the situational alignments of power. Feminist theologies of suffering and the attendant use of Scripture should offer only general guidelines for understanding suffering and allow for the maximum diversity in interpretation and reaction.

Mainstream Feminist Theologies of Suffering

Mainstream feminist suffering theologies are based on the general feminist methodology that encourages the discovery of usable models to inspire women to work towards their own liberation, in this case, from suffering. Such theologies usually include an insistence on belief in the possibility of liberation and a firm refusal to accept any suffering as redemptive or positive in any way. Suffering, according to these arguments, should never purposefully and consciously be chosen. They strongly protest against the idea that suffering is part of God's overall plan, urging that the view that suffering is part of a divinely ordained process of personal and social transformation ignores the responsibility of the oppressor to change.[4] Rosemary Ruether writes that 'God does not desire anyone's sufferings ... Suffering, death and poverty are evils. God comes not to sanctify, but to deliver us from these evils. Solidarity with the poor and with those who suffer does not mean justifying these evils, but struggling to overcome them.'[5] Marie Fortune adds that the message about suffering should never be about endurance, but about transformation; the endurance approach to suffering sees the suffering as God's plan that will only change when he's ready. 'This understanding of the meaning of suffering ... ignores the demands of God who seeks justice and promises abundance of life.'[6]

These scholars often point to ideas of the atonement and Jesus' (or God's) own suffering as a particularly damaging notion. Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker write, 'It may be that this fundamental tenet of Christianity – Christ's suffering and dying *for us* – upholds actions and attitudes that accept, glorify and even encourage [our] suffering.'[7] And if Jesus, the exemplary human, suffered, then suffering becomes a model 'to be lauded, sought, or imposed on others to aid human-to-human relationship'.[8]

4 Rankka, *Women and the Value of Suffering*, p. 92.

5 Rosemary Ruether, *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 27–28.

6 Marie Fortune, 'The Transformation of Suffering', in Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (eds.), *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook* (New York: Continuum, 1995), pp. 85–91.

7 Brown and Parker's article 'For God So Loved the World' was an important early critique. In Joanne Carlson Brown and C.R. Bohn (eds.), *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1989), pp. 1–30.

8 Pamela Dickey Young, 'Beyond Moral Influence to an Atoning Life', *Theology Today* 52 (1995), pp. 344–55.

This model has been disproportionately recommended for women, and it encourages martyrdom and the continued victimization of women. 'Women are particularly sensitive to the way in which the suffering servant image has functioned in the Christian tradition, for we have invariably played that role within the family and vis-à-vis man in the larger society ... In accepting [the suffering] interpretation of the Christ even as normative for their lives, women have participated in their own crucifixion.'[9] Brown and Parker continue their critique by arguing that to see God as suffering, either with us or in the atonement, is to 'sanction suffering as an imitation of God. Because God suffers and God is good, we are good if we suffer.'[10] Ruether adds, 'Christ's cross is used to inculcate a sense of masochistic guilt, unworthiness and passivity in Christians'.[11]

The alternative type of suffering theology proposed by many of these theologians focuses on the liberating message of the Bible and the desire of God that no one should ever have to suffer violence again.[12] Such a theology should 'encourage the sufferer[s] to use all their strength and all available resources within themselves and from others to move away' from a situation in which violence or suffering continues.[13] It urges a woman to choose to take a different stance toward the suffering in her life, one that focuses on what she can do, rather than assuming that her problems are too large, or that nothing will/can change. These scholars argue that personal suffering presents a victim with two options: endurance and acceptance or transformation, and a theologian with two options: engaging in theology either for or against the oppressed – there is no middle ground.[14]

The Case of 1 Peter

This mainstream opinion of suffering is often most visible in feminist interpretations of biblical texts, and no text is so charged for Christian feminists as 1 Peter. In 1983, in her pioneering *In Memory of Her*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza wrote the seminal feminist study of 1 Pet. 2.18–3.8, also called the *Haustafel*, or Household Code. It attracted her attention, as it has other feminists, because of its advice to women to be submissive, and because pastors and priests have used it ubiquitously to encourage women to remain in abusive marriages.[15] In the Household Code the author of

9 Sheila Collins, *A Different Heaven and Earth* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1974), pp. 88–89.

10 Brown and Parker, 'For God So Loved the World', p. 19.

11 Ruether, *To Change the World*, pp. 27–28. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has argued in *Sharing Her Word* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999) that 'by ritualizing the suffering and death of Jesus and by calling the powerless in society and church to imitate his perfect obedience and self-sacrifice, Christian ministry and theology do not interrupt but continue to foster the cycle of violence which is engendered by kyriarchal social and ecclesial structures as well as by cultural and political disciplining practices', p. 151.

12 Fortune, 'Transformation of Suffering', p. 90.

13 Fortune, 'Transformation of Suffering', p. 90.

14 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p. 137.

15 The following story from the *Los Angeles Times* is typical: a woman told her pastor that her husband woke her up at 2 am and started beating her with a metal tricycle. She was advised to 'go back, be a kinder wife; then you will win him to Christ because that's what the Bible says'. Teresa Watanabe, 'Domestic Violence a Thorny Issue for Churches', *Los Angeles Times*, Saturday, 10

1 Peter urges the Christian slaves and women 'to be submissive' (as it is most often translated) to their husbands and masters, and presents Jesus as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and a model of the perfect silent sufferer.[16] In part because of its own patriarchal attitude, but also in part because of the way it has been interpreted and wielded, the passage is indeed one of the most dangerous in the New Testament. However, a more careful reading of the text and a new interpretation will demonstrate the tensions between oppression and resistance in the text and its possible usable elements for more flexible feminist theologies of suffering.

The Household Code in 1 Peter is a later version of the Christian household code form that shows up earliest in Colossians and Ephesians, and was purposefully altered to meet the specific social situations of Christian communities.[17] The codes in Colossians and Ephesians follow an obvious pattern of advice to husbands and wives, masters and slaves, parents and children. The differences in the Petrine code indicate salient social differences – for example, its lack of advice for masters may suggest fewer Christian masters in the communities of Asia Minor where the letter is addressed than in Ephesus and Colossae. Such social distinctions may also explain the code's most significant divergence – its focus on Greco-Roman households that had been disrupted by the conversion of women and/or slaves to Christianity.

When a wife or a slave converted to Christianity without the *paterfamilias*, the stability of the household was compromised. Many early Christian sources indicate that women converted in spite of the opposition of their families, and because of their conversions, Christianity threatened family arrangements the Romans considered fundamental to the survival of their culture and empire.[18] A Roman woman's conversion to Christianity was much more destabilizing than joining the cult of Dionysus or Cybele, for example, because the new Christian would renounce participation in the vital familial cults.[19] Roman texts warned that a wife's neglect of

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October 1998: B1, p. 9. That pastor clearly was referring to 1 Pet. 3.1–2, in which the author explains to Christian wives that their unbelieving husbands 'may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct when they see the purity and reverence of your lives'.

16 There is at least one argument by a feminist classicist that 'be submissive' is not a good translation of the Greek; that 'cooperate' would be more accurate. Catherine Clark Kroeger, 'Let's Look Again at the Biblical Concept of Submission', in Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (eds.), *Violence against Women and Children*, pp. 135–40.

17 See James E. Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972).

18 Ross S. Kraemer points out that many of the women mentioned in the New Testament epistles are not specifically defined as daughters, wives, mothers or even sisters of men, and the absence of filiation for both men and women is significant. This is partly because 'many persons who joined the Christian movement did so over the objections of their families, both natal and marital, leaving them effectively fatherless, if not motherless as well'; see *Her Share of the Blessings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 136–37.

19 David Orr ('Roman Domestic Religion: The Evidence of the Household Shrines', *ANRW*, II.16, pp. 1557–91) notes that women were responsible for the decoration of the hearth, the shrine of Vesta, during religious festivals; Vesta's fire was tended by the *materfamilias* or her daughters; the household Lares were worshiped by the entire family on holidays; a bride was required to present a coin to the Lares of her new husband's home; and a wife would have been expected to participate in the worship of the household Genius on the birthday of the *paterfamilias* (pp. 1559, 1560, 1561, 1567 n. 59, 1571). Macrinus writes that a woman assumed her role as *materfamilias* and the presiding over the rituals of the household the day after her wedding, *Sat.* 1.15.22. The Lares

Roman religion was a cause of business, household or political disaster.[20] So a household 'infected' by the conversion of the wife to Christianity could face intense conflict.[21] Likewise, slaves who converted to Christianity radically defied social standards. Roman masters expected slaves to give up their native religions for Roman practice.[22] Christian slaves were not trusted with children, and their refusal to worship the family gods could result in extreme punishment.[23]

In her study Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza followed the thesis of David Balch who argued in 1981 that the Petrine code was Aristotelian in origin and represented the Christian communities' attempt to dissolve tensions between themselves and their Greco-Roman neighbors over the conversions of slaves and women.[24] Balch's thesis was based in part on the use of the phrase in 2.15 ἀγαθοποιοῦντας φιμοῦν τὴν τῶν ἀφρόνων ἀνθρώπων ἀγνωσίαν ('that by doing right you should silence the

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were so associated with the Genius of the *paterfamilias* that they were intimately linked with his honor and prosperity and that of the household as a whole; see John M.G. Barclay, 'The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity', in Halvor Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 66–80. So also G.E.M. de Ste Croix, 'Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?' in Moses Finley (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Society* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 210–49. Tertullian would later write of the same problem: What pagan husband 'will willingly bear her being taken from his side by nocturnal convocations ...? Who will, without some suspicion of his own, dismiss her to attend that Lord's Supper which they defame?' (*Ad Uxorem* 2.4 in ANF 4.46). Plutarch asserted in his *Roman Questions* 50 that without his wife's assistance a *flamen dialis* was incapable of discharging his religious duties.

20 In fact, the worship of the same gods was considered the basis of social harmony. Plutarch, *Conjugalia Praecepta* 19; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 38.22; 41.10; Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.4.16; Cicero, *Amic.* 23, *Officiis* 1.54–55, and *Dom.* 109; Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.1252a–55b. So the conversion of the wives was completely at odds with the Aristotelian ideal.

21 Schüssler Fiorenza comments on this in her analysis, but fails to see its significance for the courage or attitudes of the women themselves (*In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* [New York: Crossroad, 1983] p. 260).

22 Franz Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom, Vierter Tiel: Epilegomena* (Mainz: F. Steiner, 1963), pp. 247–59.

23 Mincius Felix, *Octavius* 8.4, and Origen *Contra Celsum* 3.55; Bömer, *Untersuchungen*, p. 265. Christian slaves could partake of the κοινωνία along with the free Christians, which would have indicated their free status in the Christian community, and which would have created a great deal of anxiety for the non-Christian masters in the community, as noted by Kathleen E. Corley, '1 Peter', in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures. II. A Feminist Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), pp. 349–60 (356).

24 Balch's thesis (in *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* [SBLMS, 26; Chico, CA: Society of Biblical Literature/Scholars Press, 1981]) has been fairly widely accepted by those within Petrine studies and without. See H. Conzelmann and A. Lindemann, *Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of New Testament Exegesis* (trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), p. 103; David Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (SBLDS, 71; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), p. 20; Lauri Thuren, *The Rhetorical Strategy of 1 Peter: With Special Regard to Ambiguous Expressions* (Åbo: Åbo Academy Press, 1990), p. 122; Ferdinand-Rupert Prostmeier, *Handlungsmodelle im ersten Petrusbrief* (Würzburg: Echter, 1990), pp. 181–326; and Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* (SBLDS 131; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), p. 127. The most vocal and convincing opposing voice has been that of John Hall Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), p. 63; and most recently, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000).

ignorance of the foolish' [NRSV]), which he interpreted as an exhortation to conform to Greco-Roman ideas of goodness, rather than as a countercultural Christian definition.[25] Schüssler Fiorenza agreed that the Household Code encourages women and slaves to be submissive in order to lessen that chronic tension caused by the conversions of those same women and slaves to Christianity.

Schüssler Fiorenza's interpretation has been followed and adapted by other feminist scholars. Rosemary R. Ruether writes that 1 Peter counsels slaves 'to passively accept not only the conditions of slavery itself, but also the arbitrary beatings inflicted on them by their masters ... This double-bind message of the cross has been particularly preached to Christian women to accept ... arbitrary violence visited upon them by husbands.'[26] Kathleen Corley argues that the *Haustafel*'s 'admonition that both slaves and women should endure even unjust or terrifying situations still serves as a scriptural justification for violence against women in the present' and that 'the glorification of suffering, like that found in 1 Peter ... holds up the victim as a model for women'.[27] Closely following Balch's explanation of the context of the exhortations, Corley thus sees the suffering as 'a means of social assimilation'; in other words, the women were encouraged to suffer harassment and possibly abuse in order simply to maintain the appearance of a harmonious household before skeptical neighbors.[28]

More recently, Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Nancy Nienhuis have added that the Petrine *Haustafel* encouraged the early Christian community 'to adopt a "kyriarchal politics of submission" to lessen its own suffering and enhance its chances of survival'.[29] The Petrine *Haustafel* is thus perceived by many feminists as a 'kyriarchal text',[30] one which uses a traditional theology of suffering to 'reinforce the hegemonic ethos of domination' by keeping ancient and modern women in their place. The feminist consensus has concluded that the *Haustafel* suffering model offers no example of liberation and ultimately works only for the oppression and silencing of women. Schüssler Fiorenza warns that we have an ethical responsibility

25 While in 2.15 it appears that the author of 1 Peter implies that the 'Gentiles' will be able to recognize some behaviors of the Christians as 'good' (although possibly only in the last days), he consistently asserts in the remainder of the passage that the Christians will suffer for 'doing good'.

26 Rosemary R. Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*; Introductions to Feminist Theology, 1; ed. Mary Grey, Lisa Isherwood, Catherine Norris and Janet Wooten (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1998), p. 99.

27 Corley, '1 Peter', pp. 351, 354.

28 Corley, '1 Peter', pp. 350–51, 355.

29 'Battered Women and the Construction of Sanctity', *JFSR* 17.1 (2001), pp. 33–62.

30 Schüssler Fiorenza defines 'kyriarchal' in *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) as 'the rule of the master or the lord'; the 'interlocking structures of domination' controlled by 'elite propertied men' (pp. 8, 117). I disagree with her basic assumption that the Petrine *Haustafel* is kyriarchal. The other *Haustafeln* are kyriarchal. They are concerned with the submission of women in the Christian household. But the Petrine *Haustafel* deals with more complex arrangements of power and conflict and situations of persecution. The power structures governing the lives of the Petrine women included the κύριος, but also the new Christian community as well as the pagan community. The author did not encourage the women to submit in order to encourage harmony in the household. He encouraged the women to disobey the κύριος and then submit to the subsequent persecution, because he believed that Jesus disobeyed the κύριος and then submitted to the subsequent persecution.

not to interpret 1 Peter in any way that might seem to justify the suffering of women.[31]

The cautions of these important scholars have been essential; 1 Peter needed to be taken out of the hands of patriarchal theologians. But the feminist focus on current situations of abuse and efforts to prevent the use of the text in perpetuating such abuse have in turn prevented alternative, constructive uses of the same text. A more nuanced analysis of 1 Peter offers an invaluable insight into a first-century theology of suffering that may have been interpreted as constructive by the women who received/believed it, and thus retrieves a valuable 'lost coin', as the much-used parable in Luke references.[32] So while most feminists agree that this text is useless for feminist purposes, and even dangerous, this paper will argue that it *is* usable – in a limited but important way.

The most salient critique of the consensus feminist exegesis of 1 Peter is that the advice to the women and slaves is not a straightforward and all-inclusive command to be obedient or submissive, as most have claimed.[33] The exhortation to 'be submissive' or 'accept authority' is better interpreted as part of a combination of discourses of persecution operating behind the text. A close reading will show that the text presumes the rebellious disobedience of the slaves and wives who were participating in Christian activities, the persecution-suffering at the hands of their angry κύριοι, and their ensuing response to and interpretation of the persecution-suffering. An analysis of the author's language in his exhortations to the slaves and women will demonstrate this complex network of interactions and assumptions.

The author addresses the slaves first, in 2.18–25, a portion of which follows:

> Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? *But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval* (emphasis mine). For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you could follow in his steps.

The slaves were for the most part household slaves, indicated by the urban makeup of most of the areas to which the letter was sent and the author's use of οἴκεται rather than δούλοι.[34] They would have been both male and female, but this essay focuses the discussion on female slaves.[35] Slaves in the Greco-Roman world were

31 Her personal letter, dated 20 July 2001.

32 Anne Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), p. 64.

33 Kienzle and Nienhuis, for example, suggest that the submission is simply a capitulation to Greco-Roman values and 'obedience that effectively prohibits women from taking action to confront and change the abuse they experience' ('Battered Women', p. 39).

34 First Peter is addressed to the Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, all well-populated cities, with the possible exception of Galatia. It is uncertain which Galatia Peter refers to here, northern Galatia, southern Galatia, or all of the area made into a province by Augustus. See Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). The other provinces were dotted with cities that had been visited by Paul.

35 Of course male slaves would also have been subject to abuse. But in the *Haustafeln* the free women are also advised to remain submissive and it is women today who are the individuals most likely to be 'ministered to' with this passage. For these reasons, and because of the feminist focus on the

extremely vulnerable, especially physically. A master had complete control over a slave's body, which could be used or abused in labor, corporal punishment, torture *and* sexual service.[36] The first three would have been demanding and degrading, but the fourth requirement, in which a slave could be forced to have sex with her master, her master's friends or other slaves, was inherently problematic for a Christian slave.

Recent scholarship by Jennifer A. Glancy regarding slaves in the Corinthian church stresses the conflict that would have arisen between a Christian slave's desire to maintain sexual purity, and the sexual demands of her master.[37] Glancy demonstrates the inconsistency in Paul's advice to the Corinthian church regarding marriage and the situation of Christian slaves. Paul clearly states that permissible sexual expression is limited to marriage and that the integrity of a Christian's body is a symbol of the integrity of the Christian body as a whole. In Paul's theology, a slave's sexual relationship with her master would be defined as πορνεία.[38] Glancy concludes that 'the sexual obligations incumbent on many slaves would have presented sometimes insuperable barriers to their participation in churches of the Pauline circle'.[39]

While the author of 1 Peter does not address the problem of sexuality directly, in 4.1-6 he urges the Christians to stay away from the licentious practices of the non-Christians, so we might reasonably assume that his views on marriage are not dissimilar to Paul's. But his language *to the slaves* suggests that he considered them to be essential members of the Christian communities.[40] We are thus confronted with an interpretive choice to explain the slaves' status in the community despite the uncertainty of their sexual status and situations: either the slaves were not confronted with sexual obligations, or the author does not care that the slaves are participating in fornication or some slaves were refusing to submit sexually. The third interpretation is most likely because it corresponds with the author's extended discussion of suffering. It is extremely likely that some Christian slaves were refusing to submit sexually as a way of negotiating between the demands of their masters and the requirements of Christianity, and they were being severely punished for their resistance.[41]

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women in the passage, I have chosen to limit the discussion to women. The term, οἴκεται usually included all household slaves, including women (Sophocles, *Trach.* 908), and was also used of women specifically (Aristophanes, *Wasps* 766). These sources were suggested by Shari Nakata of the University of California, Irvine. Jennifer Glancy, in *Slavery in Early Christianity*, notes that 'scholars have overlooked the gender of slaves' and underscores the 'necessity of considering the experiences of women in any treatment of slavery' in the early Christian period (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 17.

36 Moses Finley includes the last three in *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), pp. 94–96. Household slaves were more vulnerable to sexual abuse because of their proximity to their owners.

37 Jennifer A. Glancy, 'Obstacles to Slaves' Participation in the Corinthian Church', *JBL*, 117.3 (1998), pp. 481–501. She re-emphasizes what Scott Bartchy ('Slavery, Greco-Roman', *ABD* 5, pp. 105–10) had already noticed: that the sexual nature of some master–slave relationships is not mentioned specifically in any New Testament text, and that modern scholars have failed to look at the sex lives of Christian slaves.

38 Glancy, 'Slaves', pp. 496, 499.

39 Glancy, 'Slaves', p. 501.

40 The addresses to the socially inferior groups in the Christian *Haustafeln* are what set them apart most strikingly from Greco-Roman ethical codes, none of which directly addresses the inferior groups.

41 There is no evidence that they successfully prevented the sexual advances. But resisting in any form would have been grounds for punishment.

If this situation of sexual tension is accepted as possible, then understanding the author's correlating admonition to submit becomes even more urgent. Is he asking the slaves to submit sexually in order to ameliorate household conflict and thus avoid additional suffering? This would be the position of most feminists; indeed, any scholar who supports Balch's thesis would have to argue that this is exactly what the author of 1 Peter had in mind. For example, Schüssler Fiorenza broadly asserts that the author wanted the slaves and wives to practice 'a lifestyle that is totally conformed to the customs and ethos of the pagan household and state'.[42] Her argument must then be that the author either ignored or supported the kind of sexual service being demanded of Christian slaves by their masters. But the author's advice immediately preceding the *Haustafel*, that the believers should 'abstain from the desires of the flesh' (2.11), belies such a conclusion.[43] Therefore, the exhortation must mean something other than a general command to be submissive.

A better interpretation of the submission exhortation takes the complexity of the context into account. The unstated assumption behind the *Haustafel* is that the slaves and wives are already not submitting, already subverting the normal patriarchal system. The advice to submit does not require that they stop doing that. It is more likely that ὑποτάσσεσθε means specifically that the slaves are to accept and expect harsh punishment at the hands of masters who are angry because they (the slaves) were disobedient.[44] The author refers to this harsh punishment as suffering for behaving correctly (2:20), a concept which would incorporate resisting sexual service. The word that he uses for 'right behavior' is ἀγαθοποιέω. Schüssler Fiorenza and Balch argue that ἀγαθοποιέω means behaving in a way that the Greco-Roman masters and neighbors would find appropriate. That interpretation is inconsistent with much of the letter in which the author insists that the suffering will *continue* because of their ἀγαθοποιοῦντας (doing good).[45] Plainly, ὑποτάσσεσθε here does not mean that they are to submit sexually or to stop their non-conforming Christian activities because in that case the suffering would cease. What has been consistently overlooked by previous exegetes of 1 Peter is that the author does not advise them to end the activity that has caused the conflict; instead, he warns them

42 *In Memory of Her*, p. 261.

43 This exhortation before the *Haustafel* should not be construed as implying that the slaves who are addressed specifically in the *Haustafel* somehow 'desired' the sexual relationships they had with their masters. The exhortation regarding σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν is clearly meant as a general suggestion for the entire Christian community, not the slaves specifically. Peter's exhortations to holiness (1.13; 2.9), discussions about the negative behaviors of the Gentiles (4.3–4), and assumption that the slaves are moral beings (2.18–21) indicate that he would not condone a slave's sexual service.

44 The punishment for a slave resisting sexual service could include physical abuse or the threat of being sold. See Glancy, 'Slaves', p. 487, citing K.R. Bradley, '"The Regular, Daily Traffic in Slaves": Roman History and Contemporary History', *Classical Journal* 87 (1992), pp. 125–38. Glancy also notes the resistant behavior of slaves (*Slavery*, p. 149).

45 See also 1 Pet. 1.6–7; 2.4–8, 12, 18–20; 3.1–2, 9, 14, 15, 17; 4.1–2, 12–19; 5.8–10. Schüssler Fiorenza specifies that ἀγαθοποιοῦντας should be interpreted as 'being a good citizen because "what is good" is agreed upon by Christians as well as pagans' (*In Memory of Her*, p. 261). If the author believed that Christians and Romans agreed upon what is good, why would he turn again and again to the idea that their good behavior would cause suffering?

that the suffering will continue because their disobedience will continue, and he encourages them to accept the consequences of their Christian behavior.

As noted earlier, some feminists have pointedly critiqued the traditional doctrine of the atonement and the redemptive suffering of Christ as a harmful model for women. The pericope in 1 Pet. 2.21–25 reaffirms for those scholars the damage 1 Peter can do. Here the author of 1 Peter follows his instructions to the slaves with a brief midrash of Isa. 53.4–12. In it he demonstrates many similarities between the distress of the slaves and Christ's own experience. But by doing so, rather than justifying the self-effacing, self-sacrifice of the slaves, this portion of the text actually attests to the unjustness of their suffering. First, Jesus was innocent of wrongdoing, as are the slaves he addresses. Their attendance at Christian meetings or refusal to engage in fornication might have been disobedient, but they are truly behaving correctly. The author's point is that the most correct behavior will cause conflict in relationships with non-Christians.[46] Second, those outside the community responded to Christ's radical, non-conformist behavior with abuse, and the slaves are experiencing a similar reaction.[47] The abuse is the unjust result of doing right. It is this conflict-causing right behavior, not the suffering, which the author refers to when he tells the slaves in 2.21 'for to this you have been called'. The third point of similarity is Christ's non-retaliation. In the NRSV, v. 23a is translated as 'He did not return abuse; he did not threaten.' This is the model for Peter's idea of submission. He does not encourage passivity or the perpetuation of injustice, but does want to discourage vengeance and violence during and after persecution that results from Christian action. Last, despised and rejected, Christ died a slave's death and so both repudiated Roman society's ideas of shame and changed the perception of slavery. The lowest in the hierarchy are, by identification with Christ, the most worthy. Glancy notes that by acknowledging the excessive cruelty suffered by slaves at the hands of their masters and inviting them to view it in light of the suffering of Jesus, the author of 1 Peter 'exhibits a compassionate appreciation for the vicissitudes of life among domestic slaves'.[48] Overall, in this midrash the author identifies the slaves' suffering as unjust and explains it as the result of their own Christian difference. The Petrine author's suffering theology is remarkably similar to many feminists' preferred theology of the cross: one which defines the cross as a result of Christ's moral choice, counter-cultural impact and social compassion, rather than the result of masochism or self-sacrifice.

Like the slaves, wives functioned as an exaggerated example of every Christian's

46 Thomas P. Osborne, in 'Guide Lines for Christian Suffering: A Source-Critical and Theological Study of I Peter 2:21–25' (*Bib* 64 [1983], pp. 381–408), points out that this understanding of the apparent contradiction between actions and results may demonstrate an evolution in the Jewish concept of suffering represented by the Suffering Servant hymn which presented the positive consequences of suffering when it was inflicted upon the righteous by the unrighteous.

47 While some scholars interpret this portion of the passage to indicate that women were forced to be silent about their situations and suffering, I read the entire passage as evidence that they already had been quite vocal about them in their own Christian communities. And the advice of the author indicates in 3.15 that they be ready to speak confidently about their own faith.

48 Glancy, *Slavery*, p. 149; David Arthur deSilva, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SBLDS, 152; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

experience in the non-Christian world, being subject to misunderstanding, abuse and injustice. The author connects their experience with that of the slaves with his use of ὁμοίως before his remarks to them in 3.1-6:

> Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives ... Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you. (3.1–2, 6)

This passage is similar to the exhortation to the slaves in that it focuses on women married to non-Christians and advises them to accept their husbands' authority when experiencing persecution because of their Christian disobedience. Like the slaves, Christian wives subverted the authority of the *paterfamilias* by their independent conversions, attendance at Christian meetings, and neglect of their cult duties. It is that subversion, not assimilation, that the author encourages when he tells the wives to 'do what is good' (ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι) even if the consequences are frightening (3.11).

To be sure, there are attitudes in this text that all women should abhor and point out: that women are weaker, that their appearance is provocative, that they should be modest and silent. The author offers no liberating message or solution to abuse. He struggles with the tensions caused by women destabilizing the hierarchy, and yet he acknowledges and even encourages those same destabilizing actions. Unlike the author(s) of the *Haustafeln* in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastorals, the author faces head-on the reality that the wives, like the slaves, were making radical choices regarding a Christian lifestyle, choices that required flouting (not conforming to) Greco-Roman household norms.

Furthermore, the Household Code does not bear the characteristics of an oppressive patriarchal theology of suffering. It does not blame the victims or exculpate the oppressors. It does not disguise the evil. Even though 3.18 suggests that a lack of retaliation might encourage the conversion of the unbelieving husband, the text in no way implies or states that the suffering is the result of sin on the part of the woman (either current sin or original sin); in fact, as mentioned above, the women are praised for doing good and encouraged to continue the conflict. The non-believing husbands and masters are clearly recognized as being to blame for conflict; the text refers to some masters as σκολιοῖς, or twisted. The women are not told that their suffering is 'redemptive' in that it pays for someone's sins or helps the community in some way. Contrary to Ruether's claims, the suffering is not 'arbitrary' in the sense of meaningless; it is the result of women's attempts to change their lives and society for the better. Finally, the author provides ways for the women to interpret the suffering differently from either their κυρίοι or their neighbors.

Even more important, when we interpret this passage in its original context, we can see that there are substantial elements of 'usable' theology for modern women. The most obvious positive model in the passage is the acknowledgment that the suffering Petrine women resisted patriarchy by disobeying their husbands and masters, which included a rejection of some of their socially demanded household roles. This disobedience prompted persecutions in their own homes, at the hands of

their κυρίοι. That kind of disobedience, sought by feminists as a model of female resistance and later celebrated in feminist heroines such as Thecla and Perpetua, is quietly discernable, and *approbated,* in the Petrine *Haustafel*.[49]

When we look at the Petrine code in its historical context, we can also detect a first-century suffering theology of resistance that is different from our own, but not necessarily wrong. The Petrine women may have resisted the assumptions of their non-Christian neighbors and family members by reinterpreting the oppressive situations in ways that became meaningful in the creation of their own identities. They may have reinterpreted the suffering as empowering because it was initiated by non-Christians and thus identified them as persecuted Christians, and they participated in a discourse that understood suffering in persecution situations positively. In *The Suffering Self*, Judith Perkins has demonstrated that Christians modified normal Greco-Roman constructions of the self by constituting themselves as a community of sufferers because of persecution.[50] Late first- and early second-century Christian writers collectively affirmed that to be a Christian was to suffer.[51] Indeed, this valorization of suffering continued into the medieval period, in which women took on the suffering of Christ and gained community esteem. Ellen M. Ross writes that 'through their suffering in solidarity with Christ, medieval holy women become identified with him so closely that they become brokers of the spiritual power that inheres in Jesus himself'. She adds that although the valorization of suffering may seem 'bizarre and unhealthy to many of us now ... the study of history is not always about seeking comfortable life-models ... We may be intrigued and challenged by the power and integrity of this medieval world in which suffering manifested divine presence.'[52]

Perkins also shows that through suffering at the hands of non-Christians, Christians overturned Roman social hierarchies. The endurance of pain, specifically by the most powerless members of society, such as the slave Blandina, was eagerly portrayed by Christian writers as a reversal of Roman social constrictions and definitions that exalted them. The Roman method of establishing dominance through force was undermined by Christian endurance of that force: Christian men and women reappropriated signifiers such as the body, pain, injury and even death to mean power, rather than defeat and assimilation. Frailty and shame in one discourse were reinterpreted as strength and honor in another.[53] This Christian reconstruction of the meaning of suffering in persecution situations very likely informed the theologies of the author of 1 Peter and the women he addressed.

49 Feminist scholars sometimes make a somewhat arbitrary distinction between ancient women who left their families for Christ's sake as radical (Thecla is the most popular example), and those who remained with their families as less so. Certainly a woman rejecting the traditional morality of home was consequential and more dramatic, but the actions of a Christian woman in a non-Christian home could be just as subversive.

50 Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 8–14.

51 *Barn.* 6.9 and 7.11; Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 2.22; Polycarp, *Phil.* 9.1 and *1 Clem.* 5.1 are a few examples. Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, pp. 18–19.

52 *The Grief of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 12–13; 134–38.

53 Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, p. 76.

One might thus 'imagine'[54] those women in situations something like this: a slave woman is asked to provide sex for her master's guests, and she refuses or resists. She is beaten and probably raped. She has the option neither to run away nor to change the social structure. But she has already resisted that social structure in her choice of faith and by refusing the sex. As she endures the further humiliation of rape, it is a comfort to her that the suffering is not just, that the Christian community actively supports her and that her σωτηρ, Jesus, feels what she does. In that instance, I believe, the Petrine interpretation of suffering may have helped her.

A Critique

'But', other feminists will respond, 'what a harmful message to send to modern women living with abusive husbands'. They are correct to be wary of the damaging possibilities of this text. But that caution is primarily necessary because of the way the text has been interpreted. This leads to the point that the consensus feminist treatment (as well as the traditional patriarchal one) of 1 Peter is also problematic hermeneutically. For example, Schüssler Fiorenza's assertion that the situation of the women in 1 Peter is 'very similar' to what women experience today is historically untenable and frighteningly close to the assumptions of those 'supportive' pastors and priests.[55] The scenario just now imagined is a possible 'ancient hermeneutic' of the Petrine *Haustafel* that works only context-specifically. These first-century discourses are not the discourses of most modern women. While the resistance and courage of the women can (and should) be held up as a possible point of use in feminist theory, in general the discontinuities dominate. There are very few current examples of community-wide persecution of Christians such as the women of 1 Peter faced.[56] The slaves in particular would have faced extraordinary odds against liberation or escape, and today, in most of the world, slavery is considered one of the most horrendous evils. While domestic abuse remains a pervasive and insidious problem, abused women today do have a variety of public and private organizational, medical and legal resources to turn to, and the abuser is more often Christian than non-Christian.[57] Further, the author's identification of the women in these

54 'Informed imagining' is my term for our ability, privilege and/or responsibility to use the context of a text to suggest the most logical and likely possibilities for the life choices of ancient women. Informed imagining is not pure speculation; it assumes that we have done our homework and approach the lives of ancient women with the utmost respect.

55 Her personal letter dated 20 July 2001.

56 And even in the communities where Christians are persecuted, the discourses of religious freedom, bodily integrity, human rights and this-worldly liberation are much more available than they were to the women of 1 Peter.

57 Carolyn Osiek and David Balch affirm that ancient slaves had no recourse when abused (*Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997]). John M. Johnson noted in 'Church Response to Domestic Violence' (in C.J. Adams and M.M. Fortune [eds.], *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook* [New York: Continuum, 1995], pp. 413–21) that in 1990 there were over 1200 shelters for battered women in the US. Not enough, but the situation is improving; in 1980 there were only 175. Johnson writes that 'for the most part, we have seen a profound social change occur within a relatively brief period of time'. These improvements have been largely the result of the efforts of community, civic and professional groups, while the churches have remained quiescent.

communities with Christ as Sufferer, and as victims of persecution, indicates that because of their suffering they may have occupied a place of honor in the Christian community, something that is not an option for an abused woman in a contemporary congregation. So while we can use the text to admire and encourage the imitation of the women's courage and Christian non-conformity, to use the text to encourage women to remain in abusive relationships is a blundering cross-cultural misapplication of the text.[58]

A second flaw in the feminist handling of 1 Peter is that the timeless/prescriptive use of any text by anyone, feminist or fundamentalist, is dangerous and must be done with extreme care. Our well-meant attempts to 'put a fence around' texts that might be used to harm women are problematic. Surely women need a standard by which to critique patriarchal texts and practices and press for more liberating ones. But the result has been that some feminists have created their own lists of unacceptable texts that are no longer open to alternative interpretations, deviance from which can result in a new kind of hierarchy and marginalization.

An example of such a standard is Rosemary Ruether's famous dictum regarding the correct criteria for interpreting Scripture: 'The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women, is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive.'[59] This statement is an extremely important feminist theological principle. However, although it is meant to be determinative, using it universally may not be possible. 'Full humanity' may be interpreted differently by Afghan women and middle-class American women. A community's concepts of autonomy and humanity must be judged in relation to the moral possibilities of its own time and place and not by rigid ahistorical criteria.[60] This does not mean that we should exempt other cultures from criticism or completely suspend moral judgment; it means we should use more sophisticated and complex criteria. As Nicholas Ansell discusses, even Ruether admits that the understanding of the definition of justice has changed; in *Sexism and God-Talk* she attempts to explain why, because of their historical situation, the Hebrew prophets were not more acutely aware of the problem of sexism.[61]

The feminist failure to take time and place differences seriously can result in damage of its own. Their absolute rejection of the *Haustafel* in 1 Peter extends

58 It is extremely important to notice that the author of 1 Peter interpreted these situations as persecution situations, rather than simple interfamilial abuse. In fact, what was a normal occurrence in Roman households may have received more attention and condemnation from Christian writers because the *paterfamilias* is clearly portrayed in negative terms. It may also be helpful to compare the ambivalence of this text with the writings and experiences of early Christian ascetic women; while asceticism provided a way out of oppressive domestic situations for Christian women, it also encouraged them to sacrifice their positive attitudes towards their own sexuality and identities as women. Many feminist scholars have found asceticism to be a usable feminist model but have recognized its dangerous side as well. See Margaret Miles, *Carnal Knowing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 53–77.

59 Rosemary Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), p. 12.

60 Nicholas Ansell, '*The Woman Will Overcome the Warrior*': *A Dialogue with the Christian Feminist Theology of Rosemary Radford Ruether* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 354–57.

61 Ansell, '*The Woman Will Overcome*', pp. 354–57.

ultimately to a rejection of the women who 'submitted' and their decisions and lifestyles—not only the ancient women, but contemporary women who might find themselves in situations they consider inescapable. Women who do not strenuously seek to eliminate their own suffering sometimes feel shame and guilt when presented with feminist expectations and standards. Rita Gross argues that 'Western feminism has often, and justly, been criticized for its cultural imperialism in judging and condemning other women's lives, when in fact, we do not understand them on their own terms'. She suggests:

> exploring unexpected 'positive' results for women ensuing from practices that Western feminists may find objectionable, such as arranged marriage or polygamy ... We need to evaluate texts of all kinds with training in the cross-cultural study of religion or culture, combined with an intent to understand otherness accurately and empathetically ... Using materials from another culture or historical epoch selectively, only to strengthen an already formulated feminist hypothesis about gender ... is no more acceptable than using cross-cultural data to strengthen a favorite androcentric hypothesis.[62]

Third, feminists' overemphasis on liberation from and avoidance of suffering does not fit the experience of many women. Sometimes there is no realistic hope of the complete liberation from oppression, and a woman can only create meaning in the context of the suffering. To insist that God wants, expects, or will bring liberation is sometimes both damaging to self-esteem and a sense of a woman's own dignity and agency, especially if liberation never arrives. Shawn Copeland makes this point in the framework of her womanist theology of suffering.[63] Using stories of the sexual abuse of slave women, Copeland argues, in contrast to the insistence of other feminists that suffering is never redemptive, that for some slave women, suffering *was* redemptive because at times they endured suffering for the sake of the lives and freedom of their children.[64] Copeland points out that resistance practices such as the reconstitution of identity and the reappropriation of meaning within suffering were a more constructive theology of suffering, because in that context (as in many others) liberation was a lie.

62 Rita Gross, *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 103.

63 M. Shawn Copeland, 'Wading through Many Sorrows', in Emilie Townes (ed.), *A Troubling in My Soul* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 109–29.

64 Womanist theologians are more likely to agree with Martin Luther King that suffering can be redemptive. Jacquelyn Grant writes, 'What they [Black women] were saying was perhaps what the early church was saying to the Roman Emperor when they professed Jesus Christ as Lord ... Perhaps what these Black women were saying is that what "I am forced to do on Monday through Saturday is redemptive only in the sense that it facilitates survival". In this sense, then, Martin Luther King, Jr. was right, suffering is redemptive. True redemption takes place when one experiences the redeemer even as it is in the context of oppression. Their speaking of such titles as Lord and Master with regard to Jesus and God meant that the lords and masters of the white world were illegitimate ... Martin Luther King's notion of "suffering servant" explains how Black people and Black women were able to make sense out of, and possibly bring hope out of, apparently hopeless life situations' (Jacquelyn Grant, 'The Sin of Servanthood and the Deliverance of Discipleship', in Townes (ed.), *Troubling in my Soul*, pp. 199-218). Similarly, women survivors of concentration camps describe their suffering as redemptive at times: in ghettos and concentration camps, 'women prepared to sell their bodies for food' for their children; see Elie A. Cohen, *Human Behaviour in the Concentration Camp* (London: Free Association Books, rev. edn, 1988, [original edn, London: Cape, 1954]), p. 135.

A compassionate, constructive theology of suffering thus remembers the mothers who failed as well as those who succeeded; their courage was equivalent.[65]

A final troubling tendency is the feminists' creation of binary oppositions between resisting and submitting, between the suffering being caused by God or caused by a person and between being for oppression or against it – oppositions that rarely exist so clearly in the lives of women. Is it always possible to tell the difference between resisting and enduring? Life situations of suffering and oppression that involve other people are very often difficult to sort out in terms of cause or solution. Choices are often unclear, and options may all seem both 'good' and 'bad'. And more suffering may be necessary in the short term to achieve relief in the long term. Ursula King has noted the same reductionism:

> I do not think that feminist theologies should only be conceptualized in terms of 'struggle' and 'liberation' ... [T]o situate feminist theologies only in terms of struggle, in terms of oppression and liberation, is a diminished rather than the full picture. It is not the only possible definition and viewpoint but a particular interpretative stance whose specific value, but also inherent limitation, must be recognized ...We need to acknowledge the deeply haunting presence of ambivalence and ambiguity which runs through all attempts of interpretation and existential transformations.[66]

King advises that the 'legitimate feminist critique of the false and narrow universalisms of past theologies must not in turn lead to arrogant new claims of a different universality'. She warns that such isolation from the point of view of other women 'can in practice lead to insularity and separatism, when in theory relationality is so much stressed as a desideratum'.[67]

Developing Suffering Strategies

Looking from a different perspective, we may learn some suffering lessons from 1 Peter. While we cannot use the advice of the Petrine author paradigmatically, neither

65 Copeland, 'Wading through Many Sorrows', p. 123. Delores Williams's womanist theology further emphasizes the need to find sources of hope other than liberation. Her analysis of the biblical story of Hagar reveals that *not* being liberated has been part of the reality for African American women. 'Hagar was not liberated: she merely struggled to beat the odds to survive. Her story of survival is one that has been passed on through the black Church and deserves to be named as a resource for womanist understanding of God' (Linda Moody, *Women Encounter God: Theology across the Boundaries of Difference* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996], p. 90, pointing to Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993]). On the opposite end, the feminist emphasis on liberation from suffering entails a God who is interested only in 'success'. Every setback, every difficult situation is not one that God desires, and must be explained or overcome. In spite of other overwhelming differences, this feminist theme recalls the goals of fundamentalism, which often conceives of a successful spiritual life as one which is marked by evidences of God's *power*. This is well articulated in Martyn Percy's *Words, Wonders and Power: Understanding Contemporary Christian Fundamentalism and Revivalism* (London: SPCK, 1996).

66 Ursula King, 'Feminist Theologies in Contemporary Contexts', in Deborah Sawyer and Diane M. Collier (eds.), *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology?* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 100–14.

67 King, 'Feminist Theologies', pp. 109–10.

can we totally reject the possible ancient women's hermeneutic that is hidden in the text. Consistent with both feminist and womanist theologies, it offers a usable example of women's resistance to certain patriarchal practices and attitudes. But because the text is embedded in a very different social situation, any applications to current situations must be very general. We cannot say that, because marriage is involved in both the ancient situation and the modern situation, the application of the text to modern marriages is warranted (the conservative patriarchal position). Likewise, simply because we now believe that spousal abuse is completely avoidable and inexcusable, we cannot say that ancient women should have been equally ready and able to flee such situations, and that the women who did not flee had internalized the ideology of the oppressors (the mainstream feminist position).

First Peter also offers a positive understanding of the example of Christ's suffering, which, as was pointed out earlier, is extremely contentious for feminists. Elizabeth Johnson points out the dangers of a suffering God in *She Who Is*: 'predicating suffering of God in such a way that suffering becomes a value in itself, or that God becomes essentially weak or powerless, and then holding up this model for emulation is a trap that ensnares women's struggle for equality and full humanity ... When spoken to women, stress on the powerless suffering of God is particularly dangerous.'[68] Yet Johnson argues convincingly that a suffering God is not a powerless, annihilated, hollow God, but a God of active love, risk, purposeful vulnerability, solidarity *and* mutuality. God, having suffered, and suffering still, neither denies the reality of the suffering nor chastises the woman for experiencing it. Nothing validates a woman's sense of her self and her soul more than believing that God sees it as she sees it. It is this 'relationship of shared, sympathetic suffering', writes Wendy Farley, that 'mediates consolation and respect that can empower the sufferer to bear the pain, to resist the humiliation, to overcome the guilt'.[69] This may be what we can learn from the suffering women of 1 Peter.

A more constructive feminist position would insist that what suffering means depends on a woman's circumstances, and that even small variations in circumstance will engender great variations in the determination of the meaning of suffering.[70]

68 Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), p. 253.

69 *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), p. 81, cited in Johnson, *She Who Is*, p. 267.

70 The mainstream feminist analysis sometimes misses what James Scott (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990], p. xii) calls a 'hidden transcript'. He asserts that 'every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a "hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. The powerful, for their part, also develop a hidden transcript representing the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed. A comparison of the hidden transcript of the weak with that of the powerful and of *both* hidden transcripts to the public transcript of power relations offers a substantially new way of understanding resistance to domination.' A focus on the hidden transcript thus reveals forms of resistance and defiance. Further, Scott has argued that 'subordinate groups have typically learned, in situations short of those rare all-or-nothing struggles, to clothe their resistance and defiance in ritualisms of subordination that serve both to disguise their purposes and to provide them with a ready route of retreat that may soften the consequences of a possible failure ... Most acts of power from below, even when they are protests ... will largely observe the "rules" even if their objective is to undermine them' (p. 96).

Feminist theologies of suffering should remember that in our quest to achieve liberation, we must not forget the women who cannot. Cecile Klein's mother, who died in Auschwitz after suffering extreme sexual humiliation, had no hope of physical liberation, and if she did she was deceived;[71] a young slave girl who was raped on a table by two or three white men at a time had to find another source of meaning rather than freedom from oppression – she died while still young;[72] a 14-year-old Ugandan girl named Kevina who lost both parents and her aunts and uncles to AIDS must now care for four younger brothers, three younger sisters and her blind, 84-year-old grandfather with no money, food, health care or transportation;[73] Teresa in Iowa fears she will lose her son if she divorces her emotionally abusive husband, so she stays in the marriage, and Debbie in California refuses to sue the man who totaled her car in an automobile accident because of the emotional and mental stress it is certain to cause.[74] How can we talk realistically to these descendants of the Petrine women about liberation? Any theology of suffering that is accessible and applicable must make *sense* of suffering in small personal realities.

Fortunately, there are many non-mainstream feminist theologians now writing about suffering too. Some of them have shifted from looking at suffering as resulting from a monolithic evil source, such as patriarchy, to differentiating among different types of suffering. They want to address suffering in the particular. They ask, 'Is the suffering personal, systemic? Is it suffering which can be alleviated? Can the suffering actually be constructive (change a situation of injustice, recover from an addiction, make changes in one's life)?'[75] These theologians are more relationship oriented, rather than theory oriented. One who stands out is Patricia Wismer; while suffering a terminal illness, she wrote, 'A feminist theology of suffering then, should state both that suffering can never be justified and that suffering must be accepted as a part of life. It should state both that suffering can never be redeeming and that meaning can be found in suffering.'[76] Wismer drafted questions that women can ask themselves, that are based on her concern that any adequate Christian theology of suffering must have 'experiential relevance' and thus must speak to the real-life experiences of women in pain:

a. What are the causes of my suffering and how can they be eliminated, if at all? This question addresses the tendency to be passive and masochistic.
b. How can I find meaning in my suffering and grow through it? This addresses the need to encompass unavoidable suffering.

71 Cecile Klein, *Sentenced to Live* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1988), pp. 73, 77.

72 Dorothy Sterling (ed.), *We Are your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), pp. 25–31.

73 'Reversed Roles: The Story of Kevina', FAWE (Forum for African Women Educators) 8, 2 (April–June, 2000) at *AfricaOnline*, <www.africaonline.com/site>, date accessed, 13 April 2002.

74 The last two women mentioned are good friends of mine whose real names I have not used here. Pamela Cooper-White details in *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) just how complicated is the process of leaving an abusive relationship (pp. 100–25).

75 Rankka, *Women and the Value of Suffering*, p. 95.

76 Patricia Wismer, 'For Women in Pain', in Ann O'Hara Graff (ed.), *The Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), pp. 138–60.

c. When and how should I take on suffering I could avoid? This question recognizes the necessity of suffering for the sake of love or justice.
d. Who suffers with me? This brings up the subject of community as well as the possibility of a suffering/compassionate God.[77]

Another theologian who seems to have been neglected by many feminists is Dorothee Sölle, whose original classic work on suffering influenced many other theologians. Sölle depends largely on the work of the medieval mystics to explain how a Christian can understand the suffering experience and acknowledge the reality of suffering: 'Every acceptance of suffering is an acceptance of what exists ... It is impossible to remove oneself totally from suffering, unless one removes oneself from life itself, no longer enters relationships, makes oneself invulnerable.'[78] For Sölle, one accepts suffering because one accepts life and its ambiguities. And the symbol of that life, that reality, is God.[79] As we learn to confront suffering, we learn to accept God.

Sölle also distinguishes between meaningful and meaningless suffering: meaningful suffering is any suffering that stimulates change, knowledge, learning, and meaningless suffering is any suffering that leads finally to despair, loss of meaning, suicide. This distinction is more constructive than the normal distinction between voluntary and involuntary suffering, since so often our suffering is a combination of those two.[80]

Finally, Sölle maintains, 'there is no wrong suffering ... The assertion that someone suffers for the right or wrong reason presupposes a divine, all-penetrating judgment able to distinguish historically obsolete forms of suffering from those in our time, instead of leaving this decision to the sufferers themselves.'[81]

This critique of some feminist positions is not intended to be a neo-conservative promotion of women's internalization of patriarchal attitudes, nor should it be taken as a critique of the methods and/or goals of feminism overall. It is a reaction to the disappointment with feminist theories expressed by ordinary women experiencing suffering on a non-theoretical level. In journals and textbooks the distinctions between liberation and oppression, between good and evil, *and* between godly and godless seem so simple. But women's lives are extraordinarily not so.

77 Wismer, 'For Women in Pain', p. 149.

78 Dorothee Sölle, *Suffering* (trans. Everett R. Kalin [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1975]), p. 88; see also her *Thinking about God: An Introduction to Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International and SCM Press, 1990), pp. 120–35.

79 Sölle, *Suffering*, p. 92. Sölle's use of the term 'acceptance' here does not refer to simple endurance or quiet submission, but an actual personal choice to live with the suffering so that her own moral agency and power is affirmed.

80 Sölle, *Suffering*, pp. 125–26.

81 Sölle, *Suffering*, pp. 106–107.

Toward a Pastoral Understanding of 1 Peter 3.1–6 and Related Texts

Catherine Clark Kroeger

First Pet. 3.1–6 is often used repressively and eisegeted to argue that women should endure domestic abuse heroically in order to convert their husbands. In point of fact, the passage addresses spousal abuse only to insist that husbands honor their wives as equals and that failure to do so will obstruct the abuser's prayer life. It is significant that New Testament calls for wifely submission are always constructed within a framework of mutuality (1 Cor. 7.3–5; Eph. 5.18–33; Col. 3.13–19; 1 Pet. 2.16–3.8) and always accompanied with specific directives to prevent abuse on the part of the husband (Eph. 5.28–29; Col. 3.19; 1 Pet. 3.7).

A paramount concern in 1 Peter is the subject of suffering under persecution and how to refute the oft-repeated criticisms hurled at Christians in a hostile environment. The date of the epistle's composition and the identification of the specific persecution are subjects of considerable scholarly debate. In any event, the directive is written to believers in north-west Asia Minor during what was probably a temporary wave of persecution. Appropriate behavior in times of oppression was a subject that would preoccupy the church in its first few centuries and would occasion bitter disputes and numerous schisms.

The treatise deals with those who 'bear reproach for the name' and those who 'suffer as Christians' (1 Pet. 4.14, 16). We are reminded that at times even the name was enough to bring condemnation of death. Temporary renunciation of the faith, as later practiced even by bishops, was simply not an option.

Christians were under a great cloud of suspicion and beset by false rumors throughout the Roman Empire. One need only think of the allegations that were leveled by Nero at the followers of Christ as perpetrators of incest, impiety and sedition. They were perceived as endangering the state not only by their supposed atheism but also by their dereliction in fulfilling their obligations to the state. Critics maintained that Christians 'do not understand their civic duty'[1] and that they ought to 'accept public office in our country ... for the sake of the preservation of the laws of piety'.[2] These laws of piety, however, often required a show of reverence toward the state gods that was unacceptable to Christians. Therefore it was all the more necessary that they demonstrate their law-abiding proclivities in every other way possible, and both loyalty to established rulers and good citizenship are stressed (2.13–14). All persons are called to behavior that will belie the opposition of the critics (2.12, 15).

1 Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 116.

2 Minucius, *Octavius* 12 and Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.75 as quoted by Wilken in *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, p. 118.

There is a threefold call to submission in 1 Peter: by citizens to properly appointed authorities (2.13–16); by slaves to masters (2.18); and by wives to husbands (3.1–2). The matter of definition is an important one, as often abuse accompanies the insistence that the Bible demands wifely obedience regardless of the husband's behavior. The word for submission is ὑποτάσσω as over against a somewhat related term ὑπακούω. The latter denotes obedience and in 1 Peter is applied to a believer's obedience to Christ (1.2, 14, 20; see 2.8; 3.1, 20; 4.17). But ὑποτάσσω, rather than ὑπακούω, is applied to wives in 1 Pet. 3.1,5 as well as in Eph. 5.22, Col. 3.18 and Tit. 2.5. ὑποτάσσω is rendered as 'accept' (NRSV) and 'submit yourselves' (NIV, KJV 2.13) but it has a wide semantic range. We find implied synonyms in 2.17 ('honor', 'love', 'fear'). The literal meaning 'to place oneself under', or, in military parlance, 'to draw up behind', developed other meanings: to serve as an ally, to attach to, to identify or associate with, to adhere to or to relate in such a way as to make meaning. The term had also the sense of loyalty and of orderly and accountable behavior.[3] In view of Peter's resolute insistence that obedience must be yielded to God rather than man (Acts 4.19; 5.29), one can hardly construe the term, in a Petrine text, to require a believer's absolute obedience. In no way can duty to state be placed higher than the dictates of God or individual conscience. Rather there is a call to Christians for compliance with the structures necessary for the peaceful functioning of society and a discharge of all rightful obligations of citizenship.

Ancient philosophers maintained that the welfare of the political state depended upon proper order within the household, a state in microcosm. The conduct of slaves, wives and children was therefore of paramount concern. Since Christians met for worship in private houses, the household was particularly open to the inspection of those curious about the new faith. This occasioned special instruction to members of the family, especially women and slaves.

First Pet. 3.1–7 follows an instruction to slaves and a discussion of Christ's passion. The arrangement of segments is noteworthy. First come the advice and consolation for slaves who are mistreated, followed by a hymnic section revealing that Christ too was abused and mistreated. The juxtaposition has led many to conclude that it is the will of God for both slaves and women to suffer as Christ suffered. The passion of Christ is inserted as a recurring theme throughout the epistle (1.18–20; 2.21–25; 3.18–4.1; 4.13; 5.1), assuring believers that his sacrificial death had procured their salvation and that he would keep their souls safe if it became necessary for them to suffer 'for the sake of the name'. What were the challenges faced by a slave with an unbelieving master? Celsus, a pagan observer with an often-inaccurate knowledge of Christianity, raised a question as to why Christians advised slaves to run away.[4]

The reality was that a slave might deny Christ, run away or endure savage mistreatment. To be beaten for unruly conduct brought no reward from God, but suffering for the sake of one's faith was another matter (v. 20). Even in the later church as well as among pagans, a sound drubbing was considered highly

3 For the latter, see Polybius, *Hist.* 3.36.6–7; 18.15–40; for ὑποτάσσω as 'to bring under the influence of', see Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977).

4 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.63.

effective in bringing the religious views of a slave into accord with those of the master.[5] A careful differentiation is made in 1 Peter between the constructive behavior that should be expected from Christian slaves and the abuse that they might suffer in consequence of professing their faith.

A slave might ordinarily appeal to a magistrate if he or she was the victim of excessive brutality. During a period of intense persecution, such an action would further jeopardize the life of the slave. If the conversion to Christianity had been kept a secret, an official investigation might bring the fact to light, with disastrous consequences. In the same way, a woman might find it advisable to be judicious about revealing her espousal of the cause of Christ. Christian women were under particular criticism. One need only think of the depiction of the baker's disagreeable wife in Apuleius's *Golden Ass*. During a persecution, it was not unknown for a husband to deliver his Christian wife to the authorities.[6] A wife in such circumstances might do well to reveal her spiritual convictions only after the husband had been won over by her grace-filled lifestyle. According to 1 Pet. 3.1–4, submissive wives should demonstrate exemplary conduct and in their style of dress should avoid those characteristics commonly thought to be most aggravating to husbands. Braided hair was considered enormously seductive and gold the mark of a harlot.[7]

The call for slaves to submit can be seen as a challenge to render responsible and constructive behavior even in unjust circumstances, but not to surrender their faith or the dictates of their conscience. The call for wifely submission is significant because in the most critical area, the wife is encouraged to stand her ground. Classical literature abounds in expressions of the aggravation that men felt at the free practice of women's religion. They found the cults of women noisy, depraved, debauched, abandoned, ridiculous and disgusting. Here the wife is to demonstrate her convictions with silence instead of clamor, decorum instead of depravity, faithfulness instead of promiscuity. Instead of worshiping the gods of her husband's family as was expected of a dutiful member of the household,[8] she aims instead to win him over to another faith.

Her submission was no more renunciation of one's own decision-making capacity or conscience than was the decree to be subject to governmental authorities. Petrine 'submission' here involves scrupulous fulfillment of all the legitimate obligations of marriage while concocting rebellion at the most essential level. The aim is not subordination but conversion, not by enabling what is wrong but by persisting in what is right. This is not only subversion but the most radical sort of rebellion.

The women addressed are far from totally subservient wives. They have made a radical decision about their personal faith. As daughters they were expected to worship the household gods of their fathers' families. The text presupposes that these women will make their own decisions about religious matters. A *sine manu* marriage (literally, 'without hand') would make them still members of their fathers'

5 This view was held even by Christians (Augustine, *Epistle* 185.21 and 93.3; also Council of Toledo 16.5.52.4). If a slave was recalcitrant, progressively more severe beatings should be employed to secure the desired result (Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*). See also Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire AD 100–400* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 65 and notes.

6 Justin Martyr, *2 Apology* 2.1–9.

7 Diodorus of Sicily, 12.21 (4.416–17).

8 Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom* 142E.

household, still bound to the familial religion. A *cum manu* marriage transferred a woman's guardianship to her husband and thereby transferred her allegiance to worship the gods of his hearth. While the text seems to favor a woman's alignment with her husband rather than with her birth family, personal faith lies quite outside. The directive is issued to women whose husbands disapprove of their spiritual convictions, and to these each Christian wife should 'hold fast' (1 Pet. 5.9). Her conduct should be irreproachable, but her faith is her own; she should be fearless in maintaining it.

In v. 5, the discussion turns to Sarah 'who obeyed Abraham and called him "lord" '. 'Lord' (κύριος) was a common deferential mode of address, and the present participle may indicate habitual use. Clearly Sarah did not speak Greek and did not use this actual term. Κύριος is well attested as the legal/technical name for the male guardian and protector of a woman. Usually the responsibility was filled by her father, but other male relatives could also fill this role. Since he was also her half-brother, Sarah may well have named (καλέω) Abraham as her κύριος. As they traveled further into the unknown after the death of Sarah's father Terah, Abraham appears to have become both husband and legal protector.

Curiously enough, the word ὑπακούω is used to describe Sarah's conduct. Her outstanding obedience appears to have been in following her husband as he left the ties and comforts of a brilliant civilization to follow God's call into an unknown land among an alien people. Her life was fraught with incredible difficulties, but she persisted as a devoted wife who shared her husband's call. Women find it particularly difficult to be uprooted and sever familiar ties. To find themselves among people who do not share their personal faith is even worse. The thought of Sarah's journey of faith might give great encouragement to women living as strangers in an alien land (see 1 Pet. 1.1).

The writer's allusion to Sarah's obedience creates a perplexity. Does it refer to the sorry episode in which Abraham cravenly denied that he was married to her and allowed the king of Egypt to take her into his household? One of the functions of the κύριος was to bestow the woman in marriage. Did Abraham in this capacity give her to another?

Abraham demonstrated a flagrant lack of faith and obedience to God's promise (cf. 1 Pet. 3.1) in requiring his wife to risk life and virtue for his own self-preservation (Gen. 12.12). Confronted with a life-threatening situation in a hostile alien environment, she had little recourse but to comply. Sarah could hope only in God to deliver her (1 Pet. 3.5), a deliverance that came by the affliction of Pharaoh and his house with plagues (Gen. 12.17). She dared not reveal her identity as wife of Abraham and a pilgrim possessed of a new faith. Faced with imminent danger especially for her husband, she remained silent. In time Pharaoh came to a realization of her identity and set her free to pursue the calling of God. Abraham appears as culpable both in this story and in the similar episode with Abimelech (Gen. 20.18). Abimelech's household is visited with sterility, and the truth of Sarah and Abraham's relationship revealed (Gen. 20.3–7, 18). Sarah, by compliance with her husband's request, brought misfortune on others and reproach upon Abraham (Gen. 12.10–20; 20.2–18). Far from being a blessing to all nations, his infidelity has made him a curse.

The relationship of Sarah and Abraham was more of a mutual arrangement than a

cursory reading of the preceding text might envisage. Jewish sources speak of Abraham as obeying his wife in taking Hagar as concubine.[9] Sarah, extolled as personifying the highest virtue, illuminates her husband and helps him in his pursuit of philosophy.[10] Certainly in the biblical account she accompanies him as a faithful companion on his journey of faith. According to Philo, Sarah, whose name means virtue, wrought the amelioration of households, cities and nations.[11] Moreover, she was fearless, a trait that the writer seems to be asking Christian wives to emulate.[12] David Balch maintains that '1 Peter 3.6 teaches that wives must fear God (see 2.17; 3.2) and not be terrified of those in house or city who oppose their faith (see 3.14)'.[13]

The observation that Sarah 'obeyed' her husband must be contrasted with God's command to Abraham that he should heed and obey his wife (Gen. 21.12). The Genesis account emphasizes her insistence upon a course of action which her husband strongly opposes. God, however, tells Abraham that he is to follow his wife's bidding. The episode is another unhappy one in which Sarah sees the adolescent Ishmael engaging in behavior which threatens the newly weaned Isaac. A Hebrew verb (צחק) having both sexual and abusive connotations is used to describe the older brother's conduct (Gen. 21.9; 26.8; 39.14, 17; Exod. 32.6; 2 Sam. 2.14; cf. also Prov. 26.19). Sarah demands that he be removed from the home. Curiously enough, the apostle Paul cites that demand as being Scripture (Gal. 4.30). The text tells us that women, as daughters of Sarah, should be fearless in doing what is right.

As a deterrent to possible abusive behavior on the part of believing husbands, a new set of instructions is given that outlines the norm for Christian family living. The section (3.7) begins with 'in the same way', connecting the man's submission to that of those previously addressed: the wife (3.1–6), the household slaves (2.18–25), and the more general earlier commands (2.13, 17).

The text, however, calls for husbands to honor their spouses as joint heirs with them. An heir is one who receives an inheritance and manages it. The concept of a woman as joint heir with her husband was a radical one in both Jewish and Roman society. In Mishnaic tradition, sons inherited while daughters received maintenance.[14] A Roman woman upon *sine manu* marriage sank to the legal status of her husband's daughter and could claim only a daughter's inheritance – half that of a son. Here women are presented as co-heirs of 'life-giving grace' equal in the sight of God and of the believing community.

The allusion to the wife as a weaker vessel seems to be an acknowledgment that men are possessed of greater physical strength and should therefore refrain from using it abusively. The husband who dwelt 'according to knowledge', affirming his wife in honor and equality, would find power in his prayers. Abuse or denigration would bring an obstruction to their prayers (v. 7), a deterrent to the husband's spiritual life and growth. Here we find an echo of Isaiah's injunction that God would

9 *Jub.* 17.6; Philo, *Cher.* 9, *Congr.* 68, *Leg. All.* 3.244–45.
10 Philo, *Congr.* 71–82, 88; *Leg. All.* 3.236–45.
11 Philo, *Mut. Nom.* 149.
12 Philo, *Abr.* 205–207; *Spec. Leg.* 2.54–55.
13 David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS, 26; Chico, CA: Society of Biblical Literature/Scholars Press, 1981), p. 105.
14 *Ket.* 4.6.

not hear the prayers of the violent (Isa. 58.4). Enabling human beings to perpetuate their sin certainly does not open the doors of salvation to them (1 Pet. 3.7). Like others, a woman might suffer for her faith, but brutality at the hands of her husband is another matter.

The Bible represents women as responsible individuals, capable of making good decisions and thereby growing into maturity. Esther and Abigail are notable examples of biblical women who received commendation when they acted independently of their husband's wishes in order to save the lives of others. Other godly women made independent decisions that were honored by their husbands as well as their communities and were blessed by God (1 Sam. 1.21–24; 2 Sam. 20.15–22; 2 Kgs 4.8–13; Prov. 31.16–20). In an analogy to marriage, Christ is depicted as a bridegroom implementing the full development of the bride's potential, including the ability to make her own decisions (Eph. 5.25–27)

How then do we transpose the directives of Christians under religious persecution to contemporary households oppressed by the horror of domestic violence and abuse? We must help women to understand that they have the God-given right to make moral and spiritual decisions. Women must answer to God and not to their husbands, their relatives or their faith community. Like Sarah they may be called to strike out in a new direction. Like Sarah, they may find it necessary to insist that their children do not live in actual or potentially abusive situations. Like Sarah, they must act on their concern for the safety of their children as well as for their own. And like Sarah, they may find God's affirmation when they reach a conclusion at variance with that of their husbands.

The mandates of 2.18–3.8 are not a call for slaves or women in all situations to endure abuse. Suffering that allows a perpetrator to continue the abusive conduct can never be redemptive. Rather it brings an enablement of sin that is damaging to the soul of both perpetrator and victim. In many of today's societies, there are legitimate avenues of recourse for a laborer or a wife to gain relief from abusive treatment. Where there is legal redress for abuse, patient endurance is more likely to be seen as co-dependence rather than as exemplary conduct.

The New Testament contains definite instructions to stop wrongful conduct of fellow believers and to hold the perpetrators responsible (Mt. 18.15–17; 1 Cor. 5.1–7.1; 1 Thess. 5.14; 2 Thess. 3.14–15; 1 Tim. 5.20; Tit. 3.10–11; Jas. 5.19–20). The believing community must also recognize its duty to deliver the oppressed from the hand of the violent (Jer. 21.12; 22.3). In societies where professing Christians are still persecuted for their faith, they may still endure abuse as a consequence of their refusal to deny Christ.

How may these passages, written to people caught in persecution for the faith, be applied to present-day situations that involve no oppression for one's faith? First, we can have an understanding that believers must demonstrate a lifestyle that can withstand criticism. Second, many biblical passages condemn violence, verbal and sexual abuse; Christian women could profitably be directed toward those passages that call upon communities of faith as well as victims to engage in positive steps to stop the wrongdoing. Third, God calls husband and wife as co-heirs to live joyfully with respect and love for one another. A distortion of this balance brings obstruction, not only of effective prayer, but of true communion in marriage. Jesus specifically deplored one person's exercising dominance over another (Mt. 20.25–28; Mk 10.42–45) and

declared that it hindered intimacy (Jn 15.15). All believers are called to unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart and a humble mind. Christianity is based upon mutuality, interdependence and equality of all members. Shared decision-making is the pattern sanctified by Scripture and proven effective in human experience.

The Co-Elect Woman of 1 Peter*

Judith K. Applegate

Introduction

The ending of 1 Peter includes greetings from a person or group designated by an adjective, συνεκλεκτός (co-elect, 5.13), found nowhere else in the New Testament. The adjective as it stands in 1 Peter is preceded by a singular feminine article and has a singular feminine ending. It functions as a substantive and has a modifying prepositional phrase, ἐν Βαβυλῶνι (in Babylon), sandwiched between the article and the adjective. The complete phrase reads: ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή, literally 'the (feminine) in Babylon co-elect (feminine)'.

Over the years there have been two primary ways of understanding the feminine referent of this phrase: as an ecclesial group or as a particular woman, more particularly, Peter's wife. The most common practice in the history of interpretation has been to conclude that the feminine co-elect refers symbolically to the church in Rome.[1] This study will show that the feminine co-elect of 1 Peter need not refer to an ecclesial group and may more likely refer to a particular woman. It will then propose a historical setting and rhetorical strategy to explain a greeting to a well-known woman at the end of 1 Peter. In order to accomplish these goals, it will be necessary to consider the arguments and evidence that support both interpretive options mentioned above.

The First Option: An Ecclesial Group

A Survey of Tradition Interpretation

Very early and most often, 1 Peter's feminine co-elect has been taken to refer to a church or congregation 'in Babylon', the place from which the letter was evidently sent. This interpretation can be found as early as the fourth century. In Codex Sinaiticus the word ἐκκλησία (church) was added before the adjective συνεκλεκτή (co-elect) in an attempt to make the referent clear. This addition is also found in a few Vulgate manuscripts and in the Syriac

* Originally published in *NTS* 38 (1992), pp. 587–604. Reprinted by permission.

1 Most scholars think that Babylon represents Rome. Dennis Sylva ('1 Peter Studies: The State of the Discipline', *BTB* 10 [1980], pp. 155–63 [158]) lists F.W. Beare (*The First Epistle of Peter: the Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1958]), Holmer, Reicke and Schweizer in this camp. However, Sylva sides with Kümmel to take an 'agnostic view'. The reading Ῥώμῃ stands instead of Βαβυλῶνι in a few minuscules (4mg, 1518, 2138) according to Bruce M. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [New York: United Bible Societies, 1971; corrected edn, 1975], p. 698). See also C. Hunzinger, 'Babylon als Deckname für Rom und die Datierung des 1. Petrusbriefes', in H. Graf Reventlow (ed.), *Gottes Wort und Gottes Land: Hans-Wilhelm Herzberg zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), pp. 67–77.

Peshitta.[2] While these readings are scarce, they show that some early traditions understood the feminine noun ἐκκλησία (church) to be assumed by the text.

Following these early tendencies, most translations assume 1 Pet. 5.13 refers to a co-elect church. For instance, the King James Version[3] begins the verse with the words 'The *church that is* at Babylon, elected together with *you*' (italics are theirs). The New Revised Standard Version[4] follows Daniel Arichea and Eugene Nida's[5] suggested translation, 'Your sister church in Babylon'. Similarly, Martin Luther's translation[6] says, 'Es grüsst euch aus Babylon die Gemeinde', and the Louis Segond translation has 'L'Église des elus qui est à Babylone'.[7]

Some versions prefer to render a more literal translation, which leaves the ambiguity of this phrase intact. For example, the Revised Standard Version of 1971[8] used the familiar, 'She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen'. The *New English Bible*[9] selected the translation, 'Greetings from her who dwells in Babylon, chosen by God like you'. The *Jerusalem Bible*[10] offers a slight variation, 'Your sister in Babylon, who is with you among the chosen'. Finally, L'École Biblique de Jérusalem[11] version renders it, 'Celle qui est à Babylone, elue comme vous'.

Whether these more literal translations simply reflect a theory of translation that prefers to retain ambiguity, or whether they represent a different understanding of the referent of Peter's co-elect is difficult to determine. At any rate, if one turns to a commentary on 1 Peter for clarification of the unnamed 'she' or 'sister' of these translations, the most likely explanation will be that 'she' stands for the church in Babylon. For instance, the commonly used Greek dictionary by W. Bauer emphatically promotes the popular interpretation of this substantive with, 'No individual lady is meant, least of all Peter's wife, but rather a congregation with whom Peter is staying'.[12]

Like Bauer's lexicon, commentaries by Bo Reicke, A.R.C. Leaney, Robert

2 Nestle–Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*. The scarcity of textual evidence and the ease in explaining the addition support the assertion that this is an interpolation. In addition, both F.W. Beare (*The First Epistle of Peter*, p. 184), and J.N.D. Kelly (*A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* [New York: Harper, 1969], p. 218) claim that this reading is also found in a 'few cursives'.

3 *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* (repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d.).

4 *The Holy Bible* (Glasgow, London, New York: Collins, 1989).

5 D.C. Arichea and E.A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the First Letter from Peter* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), pp. 174–75.

6 *Die Bibel, nach der Übersetzung Martin Luthers* (Stüttgart: Würtembergische Bibelanstalt, 1984). But see also the 1948 edition, which reads 'Es grüssen euch, die samt euch auserwählt sind zu Babylon'.

7 *La Sainte Bible* (trans. Louis Segond; Paris: Alliance Biblique Française et Editions du Cerf, 1971), with 'La communauté des elus que est à Babylone'.

8 In the *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 1977.

9 Oxford University Press, 1970.

10 *The New Testament of the Jerusalem Bible* (ed. Alexander Jones; Reader's Edition; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).

11 *La Sainte Bible* (ed. L'École Biblique de Jérusalem; Paris: Cerf, 1956).

12 W. Bauer, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (ed. W. F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), p. 794.

Leighton, Gunther Schiwy and Norbert Brox simply state this interpretation without any justification or rationale.[13] Similarly, J.R. Lumby and C.E.B. Cranfield claim it is 'natural' to translate it thus.[14] Lumby goes on to claim that 'there would be a great degree of inappropriateness in speaking of a single person as elect along with these various churches of Asia'.[15] F.W. Beare, Ernst Best and Karl Hermann Schelkle use the textual variants cited above as a warrant.[16] Finally, Ernst Best argues against Peter's wife as the referent and sees the co-elect as a personification of the church rather than a grammatical referent to the word ἐκκλησία.[17]

Best's reasoning for the personification theory is that the New Testament often portrays the church by feminine personification, citing Eph. 5.22–23, and Rev. 19.7–8; 21.2–3; 22.17.[18] He, along with Edward G. Selwyn and J.N.D. Kelly, also claims that references in 2 Jn 1 and 13 to ἐκκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ (an elect lady) and τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς (your elect sister) represent parallel personifications.[19] Best also cites 1 Cor. 16.19–20 as an example parallel to 1 Pet. 5.13. He argues that both include greetings from both a church and an individual. (1 Pet. 5.13 greets both the feminine co-elect in question and Μᾶρκος ὁ υἱός μου [Mark, my son], both ruled by the same verb in the third person singular form.[20])

13 B. Reicke, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), pp. 182, 184. A.R.C. Leaney, *The Letters of Peter and Jude* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 71. Leaney specifies that the co-elect does not refer to Peter's wife. R. Leighton, *Commentary on First Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Dregel, 1972), p. 510. That this 500-page commentary contains no discussion of the feminine co-elect seems remarkable. G. Schiwy, *Die Katholischen Briefe* (Aschaffenburg: Paul Pattloch, 1973), p. 63. N. Brox, *Der erste Petrusbrief* (EKKNT, 21; Zürich: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986), p. 247.

14 J.R. Lumby uses this term in *The Epistle of St. Peter* (New York: A.C. Armstrong, 1898), p. 223. C.E.B. Cranfield (*The First Epistle of Peter* [London: SCM, 1950], p. 123) sees 'no difficulty in understanding the feminine substantive ἐκκλησία (church)' to stand behind the meaning of the feminine co-elect. Only D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Peter: An Expositional Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1984) explains what he means by 'natural'. It is natural to understand the co-elect as a reference to a 'sister' church in Babylon which sends greetings to the other 'sister' churches in Asia Minor. The problem is that the letter is addressed to the elect in Asia Minor, not to 'sister' churches. This argument will be discussed further below.

15 Lumby, *Epistle of St. Peter*, p. 230.

16 Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, pp. 182, 184; Ernst Best, *1 Peter* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), pp. 177–78; K.H. Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe: Der Judasbrief* (HTKNT, 13; Vienna: Herder, 1976), pp. 134–35 n. 4.

17 Best, *1 Peter*, pp. 177–78.

18 Best, *1 Peter*, pp. 177–78.

19 E.G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter and Jude* (New York: Harper, 1969), p. 214, 217–18. Arichea and Nida (*A Translator's Handbook on the First Letter from Peter*, p. 176) also use these phrases to justify their translation. They claim that 'these references to the church indicate that it was not an uncommon practice at the time to use the feminine gender in referring to Christian congregations'.

20 See Best, *1 Peter*, pp. 177–78. The 1 Cor. 16.19–20 greeting includes separate verbs for three different greetings. Greetings come from (1) the churches in Asia (plural noun, plural verb), (2) Aquila and Prisca with the church at their house (double subject, prepositional phrase, singular verb), and (3) all the brothers (plural subject, plural noun). The second of these greetings seems most like the 1 Peter greeting. Note, however, 'the church at their house' is represented not as the subject of the greeting, but as the object of a prepositional phrase tacked on to the end of the greeting. The subjects of the greeting in 1 Corinthians consist of two persons ruled by a singular verb. This would give warrant for understanding the double subjects in the 1 Peter greeting as two individuals as well, rather than a combination of greetings from a church and an individual.

Best also argues against the co-elect referring to Peter's wife; he claims 'it is a strange way to introduce her; we would expect "with me" rather than "in Babylon"; she would hardly have been so well-known over so wide an area that such a vague reference would identify her; moreover the "fellow" of "fellow-elect" implies "fellow-elect" with the readers and not with the writer'.[21] Hiebert claims that if it were Peter's wife, the author would not have needed the reference to Babylon to identify her. He also argues against an unknown woman, because he knows of no 'woman residing in Babylon who was so well known to the churches in Asia Minor that she would be personally identified without her name'.[22] Finally, G.W. Blenkin argues that, since Rome is referred to metaphorically by the word 'Babylon', it would also be reasonable to consider ἡ συνεκλεκτή as a metaphorical reference.[23]

Summary and Discussion of the First Option

It has been shown that there is a widespread history of scholars and translators who generally understand and interpret the co-elect of 1 Peter as a reference to the church in Rome. For many this interpretation seems so obvious that no explanation is deemed necessary. For others, a variety of reasons are given, such as textual variants, parallel references in other New Testament literature, and the inconceivability that the referent could be Peter's wife or a woman who could be well known in Asia Minor. In a discussion of these reasons, it will be shown that none of them is definitive.

Ἐκκλησία *(Church)*

The most ancient warrant for reading 'church' behind the feminine co-elect is the ἐκκλησία that is found in the few early manuscripts listed above. It must be emphasized that this variant is not regarded by any scholar as original to the text, because of its scarcity in the manuscripts and because of the ease in explaining its addition. It must be seen simply as an indicator of an early (fourth-century) inclination in interpretation. During such a period, it would not seem unusual to find a scribal correction that would make a supposed reference to the church in Rome explicit.

The second very common reason for interpreting 'church' as the referent of the 'co-elect' is that it is 'natural' or 'not difficult'. It would seem most 'natural' if most New Testament epistles were addressed to churches, or if churches were commonly referred to with feminine nouns such as 'co-elect'. However, a survey of New Testament greetings and addresses will show that while this option is possible, it is not 'natural' from a statistical point of view.

The concept of 'church' is not foreign to the New Testament, and the word ἐκκλησία (which is a feminine noun) is found in the greetings of its letters. However, the only greetings that specifically use the word ἐκκλησία (church) are found in a

21 Best, *1 Peter*, p. 178. Peter's wife is also dismissed by Lumby, *Epistle of St. Peter*, p. 230; Cranfield, *The First Epistle of Peter*, p. 123; Kelly, *Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, p. 214; Leaney, *The Letters of Peter and Jude*, p. 71; K.H. Schelkle, *Die Petrusbriefe, Der Judasbrief*, p. 134 n. 4; and others to be discussed below.

22 Hiebert, *First Peter*, p. 310.

23 G.W. Blenkin, *The First Epistle General of Peter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), p. 127.

form different from 1 Peter's greeting. In 1 Cor. 16.19 Paul uses the plural ἐκκλησίαι (churches) to relay greetings from churches in Asia and the singular ἐκκλησία (church) to include a single church in a greeting from Aquila and Priscilla. This same pattern is also found in many addresses (other than greetings) and references to specific churches. When referring to a geographical area, the plural is more often used, and when referring to a specific congregation the singular is used and modified by the particular house in which the congregation meets.[24]

Exceptions to this pattern are found in the salutations in letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians, addressed 'to the church of . . .', and the reference to Phoebe as the minister of the church at Cenchreae (Rom. 16.1). The messages addressed to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation also use this singular pattern. These are addressed to the angel of the church of a particular area, and more generally in the introduction, to the seven churches in Asia.[25] They are very close in form to the 1 Peter greeting, with the place references appearing between the feminine article and the noun ἐκκλησία (church).[26] References such as these do make it possible that the singular ἐκκλησία (church) could be understood in 1 Peter to represent all the churches that existed in Rome. However, a more thorough survey of the greetings found in New Testament letters provides another possibility.

Such a survey shows that the New Testament is no stranger to greetings from and to particular women, as well as other individuals. There are only three New Testament greetings from churches and two greetings to churches, with three out of these five connected with a particular named woman.[27] However, there are two greetings from, and ten greetings to, particular women found in the concluding sections of the canonical letters.[28] Two of these particular women are unnamed, being designated as the mother or sister of someone. In addition, while there is one instance of a greeting to a particular named person referred to as τὸν ἐκλεκτόν (the chosen),[29] this title is used nowhere in the New Testament in connection with the word ἐκκλησία (church) to describe a particular church. Finally, this author counted greetings that involved 57 particular people, named or unnamed, as opposed to 22 that involved collective references and only 5 greetings that involved groups designated specifically as churches.[30] Indeed, after surveying greetings in New Testament letters, it seems very 'natural' to think of a particular person standing behind the feminine co-elect in 1 Peter's greeting.

24 See 1 Cor. 16.1; Gal. 1.2; 2 Cor. 8.1; Rom. 16.4, 16; 1 Thess. 2.14 for the plural, and Phlm. 2; Col. 4.15; 2 Cor. 1.1; Rom. 16.5 for singular house churches.

25 See Rev. 1.4; 2.1, 8, 12, 18; 3.1, 7, 14.

26 Of course in 1 Peter the noun, ἐκκλησία, does not appear.

27 See 1 Cor. 16.19; Col. 4.15 and Rom. 16.5.

28 See 1 Cor. 16.19 and 2 Tim. 4.21 for greetings from particular women, and Col. 4.15; Rom. 16.3, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15; and 2 Tim. 4.19 for greetings addressed to specific women.

29 Rufus, Rom. 16.13.

30 Greetings *from* individuals include ten from Rom. 16.21–23 (Timothy, co-worker; Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, relatives; Tertius, writer of the letter; Gaius, host; Erastus, city treasurer; and Quartus, brother), ten from 1 Cor. 16.19 (Aquila and *Prisca*), six from 2 Cor. 4.10–14 (Aristarchus, co-prisoner; Mark, cousin of Barnabas; Jesus Justus; Epaphras; Luke, and Demas), four from 2 Tim. 4.21 (Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, *Claudia*, and all the brethren), five from Philemon (Epaphras, co-prisoner; Mark; Aristarchus; Demas; Luke, my co-worker), and one from 1 Pet. 5.13 (Mark, my

Personification of the Church

Another way of understanding the referent behind the co-elect in 1 Peter is to see it as a personification representing a church or congregation, rather than as a literal reference to the word 'church'. This is proposed by Best and implied by commentaries and translations which use the pronoun 'she' or the word 'sister' for the feminine article in 1 Pet. 5.13. This understanding is supported primarily by the references in Ephesians, Revelation and 2 John. Each of these will be considered to determine the nature of the alleged feminine personification.

In Eph. 5.22–23, the relationship of Christ to the church is illustrated by metaphorical comparison to the relationship of a husband and his wife. Throughout this passage the church is referred to with feminine pronouns, not as a feminine personification, but because of grammatical requirements (to agree with the feminine gender of the noun ἐκκλησία [church]). The church is never specifically called Christ's wife or bride but is instead called his body (5.28–30). The readers are called members of his body. While husbands are admonished to treat their wives ὡς (as) they treat their own body, and Christ's treatment of the church is used as an example, it is difficult to see how this offers an example of a feminine personification of the church. The relationship between a husband and his wife/body is analogous to that of Christ and his church/body, but this does not suggest that the church is therefore conceived of as the female wife of Christ, literally or personified.

In Revelation 19–22 apocalyptic language calls the marriage partner of the lamb or the spirit γυνή (wife, woman) or νύμφη (bride). In 21.2 the bride is the Holy City and the New Jerusalem which will come down out of heaven, where God will dwell with God's people. In this entire section the language is symbolic, and while the bride seems to be associated with God's faithful, she is always referred to in future apocalyptic language. In other words, none of the passages in this section refers to a real, presently existing church as a woman or a bride. Feminine personification seems to be reserved for the church which is promised in the future.

When individual churches are addressed in the Book of Revelation, as it has been shown above, the word ἐκκλησία (church) is used, not a feminine personification. Furthermore, the woman associated with Babylon in the Book of Revelation is called the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth (17.5). She represents the great city that is destined to be judged and destroyed by fire (Rev. 17.1–18.24).

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son). Greetings *to* individuals include twenty-five from Rom. 16.1–15 (*Phoebe* is 'commended' and called deacon of the church at Cenchreae; the following are 'greeted': *Prisca* and Aquila; Epaenetus, my beloved; *Mary*; Andronicus and *Junia*, my relatives and co-prisoners; Ampliatus, my beloved; Urbanus, co-worker; Stachys, beloved; Apelles; Herodian, my relative; *Tryphaena* and *Tryphosa*, workers; *Persis*, beloved; Rufus; his *mother* and mine; Asyncritus; Phlegon; Hermes; Patrobas; Hermas; Philologus; *Julia*; Nereus; his *sister*; and Olympas), two from 1 Cor. 16.19 (Aquila and *Prisca*), one from Col. 4.15 (*Nympha*), and two from 2 Tim. 4.19 (*Prisca* and Aquila). Greetings are made *to* 'all the churches' in Rom. 16.4 and 16.16. Greetings are sent *from* the 'churches in Asia' in 1 Cor. 16.19. Greetings to and from the 'church in the house of *Prisca* and Aquila' are found in Rom. 16.4–5 and 1 Cor. 16.19. The 'church in *Nympha's* house' is greeted in Col. 4.15. Greetings go to the 'church in your house' in Philemon 2. Other collective greetings include 'the family of' Aristobulus (Rom. 16.10), 'the family of' Narcissus (Rom. 16.11, both with the construction 'τοὺς ἐκ τῶν ...'), 'all the brethren' (1 Cor. 16.20; Phil. 4.21; Col. 4.15; 1 Thess. 5.26; 2 Tim. 4.21), 'all the saints' (2 Cor. 13.12; Phil. 4.21), 'all those with me' (Tit. 3.15), the 'children of your elect sister' (2 Jn 13), and 'the friends' (3 Jn 15, twice).

Neither the apocalyptic bride of the lamb nor the whore of Babylon qualifies as a parallel for a figure who would be sending greetings to the Asia Minor Christians. The uses of feminine personifications in the Book of Revelation are qualitatively different from anything which the greeting in 1 Peter suggests.

The final references that are claimed to be important parallels to the feminine co-elect in 1 Peter are found in 2 Jn 1 and 13. In these verses the feminine forms ἐκλεκτῇ and ἐκλεκτῆς (elect) are used to describe the two feminine nouns κυρίᾳ (the feminine form of the word 'lord' or 'master') and ἀδελφῆς (sister). These feminine references are also unnamed or unidentified like 1 Peter's feminine co-elect. A survey of the literature discussing 2 John references shows that the interpretation of the ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ (elect lady) and τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς (her elect sister) is still debated.[31]

Feminine personification of the church is the dominant interpretation. Raymond Brown's survey of the arguments used to support this interpretation in 2 John sounds very much like the list used for the 1 Peter case. Brown states that if a particular woman had been meant by ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ, she would have been named, that it is 'natural to think of the church in feminine imagery',[32] and that the content of the letter favors a 'collective interpretation' (i.e. it appears to be written to a group rather than an individual). Finally, the arguments complete a circle as 2 John scholars appeal to 1 Peter's feminine co-elect for proof of feminine personification of the church.

Space allows only a few brief comments that suggest the possibility of understanding 2 John's two instances of ἐκλεκτῇ as particular women instead of personifications. First, it has been shown that there is one very clear instance of the title 'elect' used to refer to a named person in the New Testament (Rom. 16.13), but not to a church. In addition, there are at least two New Testament greetings that address unnamed women, even in the midst of other greetings to women who are named (Rom. 16.13, 15). In light of these references, it is not impossible to conceive of an unnamed woman being addressed by the title 'elect', rather than by name. Second, Brown points out that the Johannine literature contains other references to titled, but unnamed people, such as the 'beloved disciple' and the 'mother of Jesus'. In this tradition it would not seem unusual to find another titled woman addressed without reference to her name.

Third, the very closely related 3 John is addressed to an individual as are four Pauline epistles. Philemon is addressed to three named individuals, as well as the church that they represent. Second John could also be addressed to an individual and the church to which she belonged. This would allow it to be addressed to a collective audience, even while the ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ is interpreted as an individual. If it were addressed both to the ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ and her children, she could easily be understood as the primary leader of a congregation. This congregation could be described as

31 For such a survey see Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB, 30; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), pp. 647–55.

32 Brown offers such examples of this as Jer. 31.21, 'O Virgin Israel', and the Revelation passages discussed above, as well as some extra-canonical references. Space does not permit a treatment of each of these examples; however, it is the judgment of this study that none of them is a convincing parallel.

her children because they are her converts and/or are under her care and/or jurisdiction.[33]

These comments are not meant to deny that it is possible to understand the chosen lady and her chosen sister of 2 John as personified references to the church. However, they are intended to show that there is another way to interpret the evidence which may be more 'natural' than the personification theory. It will be shown that this is also the case with the feminine co-elect of 1 Peter.

Not Peter's Wife

The third reason given for understanding the referent of 1 Peter's feminine co-elect as a church is a negative argument. This is expressed as an objection to the idea of interpreting the referent as Peter's wife. While at least seven of the surveyed commentaries offer this objection, few of them supply any argument to support it. Best's assertion that 'the co-elect in Babylon' would be a strange way of introducing Peter's wife, and Kelly's argument that if Peter's wife had been intended her name would have been supplied are really suppositions rather than arguments. In fact, in the only places where the existence of Peter's wife is signaled in the New Testament, it is signaled by vague references with no name mentioned.[34] If she traveled with Peter, as 1 Cor. 9.5 suggests, she could easily have been known to churches with which Peter was familiar.

No Individual Woman

Lumby's assertion that it would be inappropriate to refer to a single person as co-elect along with all the churches in Asia Minor is the only substantive objection to Peter's wife being the referent found in the surveyed literature. Actually, this argument contends that no individual woman could be the referent in 1 Pet. 5.13. This reasoning coincides with the assumption that the feminine co-elect in 5.13 is intended to be understood in relation to the ἐκλεκτοῖς (elect) in 1.1 in the letter's introduction, rather than in relation to Peter, the 'author'. It also assumes that both ἐκλεκτοῖς (elect, 1.1) and ἡ συνεκλεκτή (the feminine co-elect, 5.13) refer to congregations rather than to individuals.

However, what is overlooked by Lumby, Best and others is that there is nothing in 1 Peter to indicate that either word refers to churches or congregations per se.[35] In

33 See 1 Cor. 4.14; Gal. 4.19; 3 Jn 4; 1 Tim. 1.18; Tit. 1.4; and Phlm. 10 for believers called children. While Brown cites Plummer and Ross as suggesting that the elect κύρια could refer to 'an unnamed lady of importance', and while this is what the feminine form of κύριος (lord) might suggest, Brown dismisses this possibility on the grounds that 3 John is addressed to a named leader. This, Brown claims, shows that 'normally the Presbyter would name an individual recipient' (p. 653). The question is, how does one establish 'normalcy' when one has only two examples of something from which to judge? It is just as 'normal' to address a letter to an individual, and to conclude that the elect κύρια must be Christian followers who are called 'children', and are associated with a certain leader, as in 3 Jn 4. There is no such trend to call believers 'children' of a particular church.

34 See references to Simon's mother-in-law in Mt. 8.14; Mk 1.30; and Lk. 4.38. She is also said to have traveled with Peter in 1 Cor. 9.5.

35 The word ἐκλεκτός (elect) is used twice in 1 Peter to refer to Jesus, called 'chosen by God' and 'a chosen cornerstone' (2.4, 6), and one additional time to refer to the readers as a whole, called 'a chosen race' (2.9). Of course, the letter is associating both the readers and the co-elect woman with Jesus by referring to them all by this title.

fact, the text seems to oppose such an interpretation. If both words were intended to refer specifically to churches, one would expect them both to occur in the same feminine gender (either to agree with the feminine, ἐκκλησία, or to represent feminine personification). However, while the co-elect of 5.13 is in the singular feminine form, the elect of 1.1 is in the plural, *masculine* form. It is difficult to account for two references to the church which appear to frame the entire letter with an intentional *inclusio*, occurring in different genders. If it is 'natural' to refer to the church in the feminine, why would the author(s) use the masculine in the opening frame and the feminine in the closing one?

On the other hand, it is easy to account for the different forms if both words are taken to refer to individuals. In this case one would expect the masculine plural to be used to refer to a large group and the feminine singular to refer to a particular woman. With the *inclusio* in mind, it seems more likely that the letter is addressed more generally to the Christian population of Asia Minor, rather than to single churches located in the various places mentioned.

This would not be unusual in the New Testament. While 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon include salutations addressed specifically to churches, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John and Jude all include salutations to plural categories of people like 'all the saints in ...' (2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians). Since 1 and 2 Corinthians contain salutations addressed both to the church at Corinth, as well as to a more general grouping of Christians, it does not seem likely that the more general references refer to specific churches. 1 Corinthians is addressed not only to 'the church of God existing in Corinth', but also to 'those sanctified in Christ, called saints, with (σύν) all the saints in all of Achaia'. In light of these and other New Testament salutations, it is very possible to understand 1 Peter as being addressed to the elect population of Asia Minor dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, rather than more formally to specific churches located in these areas.

If the 1 Peter salutation is addressed to the elect population of Asia Minor, it would seem very appropriate to find greetings sent from an individual designated as elect along with these Christians. This woman could have been designated as 'co-elect' because she came from Asia Minor, and/or because she was being closely identified with the Asia Minor Christians for reasons strategic to the letter's message. Or it is possible that 'co-elect' was some kind of a title, like 'co-presbyter' which stands in relation to the masculine plural, 'presbyters' in 1 Pet. 5.1. At any rate, it has been shown that it would not be inappropriate to understand an individual to be co-elect along with the individual Christians in Asia Minor, whether that individual be Peter's wife or another woman.

The Second Option: A Particular Woman

Peter's Wife

This study has suggested that the arguments ruling out Peter's wife are not compelling. However, since this option has fallen out of favor, it is difficult to find it considered in the literature from a positive point of view. Kelly's comment is common: 'Some Protestant commentaries in the past liked to identify her as the wife

whom Peter took around with him (1 Cor. 9.5; Mt. 8.14) and whom tradition (Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 7.11.63) saluted as a martyr'.[36] G.W. Blenkin lists these warrants and adds a third. He claims that 'some commentators' argue, 'that the accompanying salutation from Mark, "my son", makes it more probable that ἡ συνεκλεκτή also refers to an individual, whereas such a metaphorical description of a church would be hardly intelligible in a letter, though it might be used in Apocalyptic literature'.[37] Indeed this study has shown that such a metaphorical understanding of συνεκλεκτή, while not impossible, may be less likely than the more literal interpretation. However, this hardly decides the case.

On the other hand, it is possible to imagine another strategy for interpreting the co-elect as Peter's wife. First Peter contains four words which begin with the prefix συν- (co-) that are unusual and distinctive. Much recent attention has been given to the sociological function of such words. Wayne Meeks identifies συν- compounds along with familial terminology and special vocabulary like 'elect' as a language that functions to build group cohesiveness.[38] For example, in 1 Peter, the author addresses elders among the readers as πρεσβυτέρους (presbyters, 5.1), and then calls himself ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος (the co-presbyter, 5.1). This language functions not only to establish the author's authority, but also to build a bond between the author and reader. A reference to a co-elect woman would do the same, since the readers are called elect.

Two additional συν- compounds appear in the section of 1 Peter's household code which instructs husbands about how to treat their wives. Husbands are told to live together with their wives (συνοικοῦντες, cohabit, 3.7), honoring them as the weaker vessel. Husbands are also reminded that their wives are συγκληρονόμοις (co-heirs, 3.7) of the grace of life, who can nevertheless hinder their prayers. John Elliott notes, '... the parallel *syn-* composites *synoikountes* and *synkleronomois* in 3.7 (cf. also the composite *sympatheis* in v. 8) underline the mutuality of solidarity of familial relationships, a theme of vital concern to the author(s)'.[39] Since 1 Peter uses these very unusual συν- compounds to speak specifically of relationships between husbands and wives, it would not be surprising to find another unusual συν- compound, συνεκλεκτή (co-elect), used in reference to the wife of Peter. In this case, the author would be underlining the household code's admonition to husbands by demonstrating a close relationship between the author and his wife.

While this proposal may not be dismissed altogether, there is a flaw in the argument. The problem is that Peter himself is never referred to in the letter as

36 Kelly, *Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, p. 217. In J.E.L. Oulton and H. Chadwick (eds.), *Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origin with Introduction and Notes* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), p. 133, the reference reads as follows: 'So we are told that the blessed Peter, when he beheld his wife on her way to execution, rejoiced on account of her call and her homeward journey, and addressed her by name with words of exhortation and good cheer, bidding her to "remember the Lord"'. Oulton and Chadwick suggest that Clement is the only extant source of this tradition about Peter's wife.

37 Blenkin, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, p. 127.

38 Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 85–86.

39 J.H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), p. 201, also pp. 135–36, 227.

ἐκλεκτός (elect), making it unlikely that a reference to someone as co-elect would have him in mind. Therefore, it seems much more likely that if a particular woman is meant by the feminine co-elect, she is probably being associated closely with (σύν) the readers, who are called ἐκλεκτοῖς (elect), rather than with the author. It therefore seems more fruitful to consider the feminine co-elect, not as Peter's wife, but as another woman who was well known to and connected in some way with the elect Christians in Asia Minor. In order for this consideration to become real, it must be possible to imagine a woman who was well known in Asia Minor and who might have had contact with Peter and/or been important to the Petrine group who authored the letter. It will also be necessary to propose a strategy for such a titled woman to be included in the greetings section of the letter.[40]

A Woman Known to Asia Minor

While women are not depicted in Acts as missionary companions of Peter or Paul, the portrayal of such women as Dorcas (also called Tabitha, Acts 9.36–41), Lydia (Acts 16.14–15, 40) and Priscilla (Acts 18.1–3, 18–19, 26) suggests that women functioned in important ways in the mission of the early church. The only women with whom Peter is shown in direct interaction in Acts are the women in the Upper Room including Mary, the mother of Jesus (1.14); Sapphira, who was questioned and condemned by Peter (5.1–10); Dorcas, whom Peter raised, and the widows who grieved for her (9.36–41); Mary, the mother of John Mark, to whose house Peter fled after his escape from prison, and Rhoda, the young woman who forgot to open the door for him there (12.12–17).

However, in Luke, as one of the disciples who traveled with Jesus, Peter is indirectly connected with the women who also traveled with Jesus (named as Susanna; Joanna, wife of Chuza, steward of Herod; and many others, 8.1–3), and the women who discovered and witnessed to the empty tomb (described as 'women who followed Jesus from Galilee', with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of Jesus named, and including 'the rest with them', 23.49; 24.5–11). The point of this study is not to identify any of these particular women as the feminine co-elect of 1 Peter. The point is to show that the New Testament does associate women with Peter. It is only then that it is possible to propose that the co-elect could refer to a particular woman (whose identity has probably been irretrievably lost) who may have been associated with Peter and/or the Petrine group who authored the letter. But

40 Since reference is made to Silvanus as τοῦ πιστοῦ ἀδελφοῦ (the faithful brother, 5.12) and to Mark as ὁ υἱός μου (my son, 5.13), John H. Elliott argues that the phrase ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή (the co-elect woman in Babylon) is most likely a greeting from the co-elect ἀδελφή (sister) who is in Babylon (Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*, pp. 202, 273. See also J.H. Elliott, *I & II Peter/Jude* [Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982], pp. 113–14). Elliott grasps at every straw of evidence in the New Testament to establish a historical connection between Peter, Silvanus and Mark. For instance, Elliott argues that Peter and Mark were associated, because in Acts 12 Peter is said to have fled to the house of Mark's mother after his prison escape in Jerusalem. Elliott refers to this house as 'Mark's home', and then concludes that 'Peter's flight to Mark's household indicates an obvious association of the two.' This is concluded even though, as Elliott points out, Acts clearly places Mark in Antioch at the time of Peter's escape (*Home for the Homeless*, pp. 275–79, esp. p. 276).

it is also necessary to be able to conceive of women being central in the leadership and mission of the early church.[41]

A reading of Romans, ch. 16, provides some evidence of women's leadership and importance in the house churches of Asia Minor. It also illustrates the familial language, including many συν- compounds, which was seemingly common for describing church leaders. The Romans 16 greeting begins with the recommendation of Phoebe to the church. The church is asked to receive her and stand by her, providing whatever she may need. She is called τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν (our sister) and διάκονον (minister) of the church in Cenchreae. She is also referred to as a προστάτις (protectress) of many including Paul (Rom. 16.1–2). Next, Paul greets Priscilla and Aquila who are called συνεργούς (co-workers) who have risked their necks for Paul's safety (Rom. 16.3–5).

In addition to Priscilla, four other women are said to have worked hard (κοπιάω) for the mission. These are Mary (v. 6), Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis (v. 12). Junia, along with Andronicus, is called συγγενεῖς (kinfolk) and συναιχμαλώτους (co-captive) by Paul. Together they are also referred to as outstanding among the apostles, and 'in Christ' before Paul. Finally, the mother of Rufus, τὸν ἐκλεκτὸν (the chosen); Julia, the sister of Nereus; and all the saints with them (σὺν αὐτοῖς) are greeted. In the sixteen verses of this greeting, nine different women are mentioned. These are described by terms such as minister, co-worker, co-captive, kinsfolk, worker, apostle, mother and sister.

In other letters by Paul and in those ascribed to Paul we find additional evidence of women's active leadership in early house churches, along with more συν- compounds. In Phil. 4.2–4 Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind, referring to them as women αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν μοι (who struggled together [*co-struggled*] with me in the gospel). Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza points out that Apphia, along with Philemon and Archippus, is greeted as a leader and recognized as a co-missionary by Paul (Philemon 1).[42] In this greeting Philemon is called a brother and Apphia a sister of Paul's. Here, greetings are further extended to the church in their house (τῇ κατ' οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ). In a similar fashion, Colossians includes greetings to Nympha and the church that meets in her home (Νύμφαν καὶ τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν, 4.15). Finally 2 Timothy contains greetings to Paul's co-missionaries, Priscilla and Aquila, as well as to a woman named Claudia.

In addition to the Lukan and Pauline writings, 2 and 3 John provide evidence that leaders addressed in such letters wielded a great deal of power in the local church. Contrary to Raymond Brown, Schüssler Fiorenza assumes that both these letters are addressed to individuals.[43] She claims that these individuals wielded a great deal of power in their congregations. 'The presbyter in the Johannine community can make appeals and plead that hospitality is granted to his own emissaries, he can warn and

41 See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), for a sustained argument for such a conception. For her discussion of the leadership of women in the churches in Asia Minor, see pp. 245–50.

42 I am following the discussion of women in Asia Minor by Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her*, pp. 246–47) very closely in this section.

43 Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 249.

announce his personal intervention, but neither Diotraphes (of 3 John) nor "the elect lady" are [*sic*] subject to his authority'.[44]

From a perspective such as this, it is not difficult to imagine that a letter to Christians in Asia Minor (possibly from Rome) might include a greeting from a woman known so well that she is referred to only by title. It may be that this woman had originated in Asia Minor, traveled as a missionary in the area, and had finally settled in Rome (as Elliott argues for Peter, Silvanus and Mark). This would account for her being called 'co-elect', elect along with the Christians in Asia. But why would this woman be mentioned by 1 Peter's author(s) in the closing greeting? Why did 1 Peter need the signature of the co-elect woman?

An answer to these questions may be found in 1 Peter's household code, referred to above. The part of the household code that is addressed to women focuses clearly on women married to pagan husbands, prescribing submissive behavior that would encourage the conversion of their husbands (3.1–6). References to wearing fancy hairstyles, gold and garments suggest that the code is addressed to wealthy women, possibly benefactors and leaders in the house churches (3.3). If 1 Peter were written during a time when conflict had developed between women's leadership and the pagan household, the household code may have been designed to reduce this tension by asking such women to submit to their pagan husbands.[45] If this is true, the message of the code would have seemed like a betrayal and an affront to wealthy women serving as leaders and missionaries in the church without regard to their pagan households. The plausibility of this contention is supported by the fact that the code itself draws on the authority of Sarah, a biblical matriarch, to support its demands (3.6). Its author(s) may have felt it necessary to include the signature of a contemporary well-known 'co-elect' woman to further authorize the undermining message of the code.[46]

Conclusion

It has been shown that it is not 'un-natural' or unreasonable to envision a specific woman as the referent of the 'feminine co-elect' of 1 Pet. 5.13. In fact it is 'natural' to find greetings from individuals (including women) in the closing sections of New Testament epistles. With this in mind it is possible to hypothesize a historical situation in which a greeting from a woman would be feasible. Such a hypothesis

44 Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 249. It is interesting that while Schüssler Fiorenza assumes that 'the elect lady' of 2 John is a woman who heads her own house church, she passes over the 'co-elect' woman of 1 Peter.

45 Schüssler Fiorenza refers to apocryphal literature from such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* to argue for the existence of such tension and women's resistance to subjugation to pagan families (*In Memory of Her*, pp. 245–50).

46 Speculation as to whether this woman actually supported the content and intention of 1 Peter's household code may arise at this point. Based on the arguments found in this study, it is possible to imagine at least two possibilities. If she were actually a follower of Peter, when he was alive and a co-author of 1 Peter, as Elliott argues for Silvanus and Mark, she could be considered a traitor to the women leaders of Asia Minor whose power was threatened by the code. If she, like Peter, were already dead, it is possible that her title and reputation were used to support a position in regard to women that evolved in the church after her passing, thus, in effect, betraying her own position and prestige.

would argue that women were active leaders in the early Christian movement, and that such a leader might have been associated with Peter and/or his associates. This woman may have been referred to as 'co-elect', along with the audience of the letter, because she had functioned as missionary and church leader in Asia Minor and was well known to this audience. Having settled in Rome along with Peter and/or the post-Petrine group who authored the letter, she could have been mentioned in this epistle in order to authorize the message of the letter. Her particular participation as a sender of this letter would have been important in order to help authorize the household code, because this code was expected to find resistance from women who were Christian leaders in Asia Minor.

Gender in the Letter of James: A Surprising Witness

Luke Timothy Johnson

The testimony of the Letter of James on the question of gender can only be heard by attending carefully to the voice of the composition itself. This may seem an obvious procedure, but it is one that has seldom been employed when studying thematic elements in this small writing. More often, theories about the putative author and his supposed place in the development of early Christian history have substituted for a close analysis of the text itself. Thus, James has largely been read from the perspective of a 'Jewish Christianity', that, connected to James of Jerusalem, is more or less antagonistic to Paul,[1] or a late 'Paulinist' Christianity that seeks to rescue Paul from the hands of libertines who distort his teaching on righteousness by faith rather than works of law.[2] In either case, what is considered to be of interest in the composition amounts to a handful of verses that can be compared to Paul, and most of what is truly fascinating about the composition eludes comment.

A way out of such unhappy and uncreative reductions may be afforded by three quick (but well-supported) adjustments. The first is to sever the composition from the diverse hagiographical traditions concerning the Brother of Jesus in early Christianity, recognizing that even if that James is the author (as well he might be), we are unable to argue from his portrait to the meaning of his composition.[3] The second is to allow the composition to locate itself in early Christianity. When we do this we discover that the Jewishness of the writing is pretty much the same as with most other writings in the New Testament canon – that is, it interprets reality within the symbolic world of Torah in the light of Jesus – and that internal evidence suggests that James may well be among our earliest Christian compositions.[4] Third, we allow the composition's own preoccupation to provide the frame for our inquiry, recognizing that the question we put to the text may not be the one that it is itself

1 The classic example is M. Hengel, 'Der Jakobusbriefe als antipaulinische Polemik', in G.F. Hawthorne and O. Betz (eds.), *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 248–78.

2 See, for example, J. Jeremias, 'Paul and James', *ExpTim* 66 (1955), pp. 368–71; J.C. Lodge, 'James and Paul at Cross-Purposes? James 2.22', *Bib* 62 (1981), pp. 195–213.

3 The recent *James the Just and Christian Origins*, edited by B. Chilton and C.A. Evans (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1999), continues to focus on Josephus/Eusebius. A more complex approach to the 'historical' James is required, starting with the recognition that the several sources each have interests in James as a hero that shape their respective accounts; see L.T. Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB, 37A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 94–106.

4 There are six basic reasons why James should be dated in the first generation: (1) it lacks *any* of the classic signs of development in doctrine or institution or delay of parousia; (2) it reflects the social realities and outlook of a counter-cultural sect in the early stages of its existence; (3) it uses sayings of Jesus in a stage closer to that of Q than to the synoptic redaction; (4) it resembles our earliest datable writer, Paul, across a wide range of points; (5) it has many incidental details suggesting a Palestinian provenance; (6) it is almost certainly used by Clement of Rome; see Johnson, *Letter of James*, pp. 118–21.

seeking to answer. In the present case, this means recognizing that James's concern is to distinguish sharply the moral patterns of 'friendship with God' and those of 'friendship with the world' and in particular to summon those he designates as 'double-minded' to the realization that they cannot be friends with everyone but must make their practice conform to their profession.[5]

I approach James, then, with the two (not ungrounded) premises that it is the voice of the composition rather than that of its putative author that we seek, and that the voice is one from the first generation of the Christian movement that, in the broadest sense, speaks wisdom.[6] The validity of these premises is best tested by the quality of the reading of James they enable. I propose to read James for gender through three approaches, looking first at explicitly gendered language and roles, second at sexual imagery, and finally at the implications of James's content in comparison to other Wisdom writings. The convergence of these lines of evidence will support an overall characterization of James's testimony on gender.

Explicitly Gendered Language and Roles

At first glance, James shares the casual androcentrism typical of his time and of the symbolic world of Torah. He never uses the noun 'woman' (γυνή). God is designated 'father' (πατήρ) in 1.17, 27; 3.9, and Abraham as 'our father' (ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν, 2.21). Consistent with the use of fictive kinship language common among early Christians,[7] James addresses his readers with the vocative 'my brothers' (ἀδελφοί μου, 1.2; 2.1, 14; 3.1, 10, 12; 4.11; 5.7, 9, 10, 12, 19) and 'my beloved brothers' (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί, 1.16, 19; 2.5). Should such vocatives be taken as including women members of the community? The evidence is mixed. In 1.9, James refers to 'the lowly brother' (ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός), but this is matched by 2.15, which speaks of 'a brother or sister' (ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφή) going naked and hungry. These instances would suggest that James's language is androcentric but not in principle exclusive.

Against this, however, is the letter's frequent use of ἀνήρ in several of its aphorisms, a word impossible to take with reference to both genders (1.8, 12, 20, 23; 2.2; 3.2). Four of these occur in the first chapter, which is aphoristic in character. Perhaps James's language is influenced here (as in other ways) by the Septuagint, especially in the Wisdom literature, in which ἀνήρ stands without apology as the subject of instruction.[8] The usage in 3.2 is equally sapiential. In 2.2, the use of ἀνήρ may be owed to the fact that James speaks of a specific male rather than people in

5 See L.T. Johnson, 'Friendship with the World and Friendship with God: A Study of Discipleship in James', in F. Segovia (ed.), *Discipleship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 166–83.

6 Among many others, see B.R. Halston, 'The Epistle of James: Christian Wisdom?', *SE* 4 (1968), pp. 308–14; E. Baasland, 'Der Jakobusbrief als neutestamentliche Weisheitschrift', *ST* 36 (1982), pp. 119–39; R.W. Wall, *The Community of the Wise: The Letter of James* (The New Testament in Context; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

7 W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 87, 225.

8 ἀνήρ is used some 144 times in Proverbs, 12 times in Ecclesiastes, and 85 times in Sirach. For the influence of the Septuagint on James, see Johnson, *Letter of James*, pp. 7–8.

general. But this is all quibbling, really. Basically, James's language is androcentric, and there's an end to it. We could scarcely expect otherwise.

James presents to his readers three male figures from Torah as moral exemplars. Abraham exemplifies the obedience of faith spelled out in works (2.21–23), Job personifies the patient endurance of faith (5.11), and Elijah represents the powerful prayer of faith (5.17).[9] James includes Rahab together with Abraham as an example of how faith is expressed in works: her hospitality to the scouts of Israel embodied her faith in the one God (2.25–26).[10] The designations James uses for the male heroes indicate their place of honor within the tradition of Torah. Abraham is 'our father' (2.21) and 'friend of God' (2.23). Job is connected to 'the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord' (5.10). Elijah, although 'a person like us in nature' (ἄνθρωπος ἦν ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῖν, 5.17) is 'a righteous man' (δικαίου, 5.16). In contrast, Rahab is identified solely as 'the harlot' (ἡ πόρνη), a designation that is not exceptional within the midrashic tradition,[11] but is nevertheless hardly honorific. It has been argued with some justice that the combination of Abraham and Rahab, together with the otherwise odd use of the plural 'deeds' (τοῖς ἔργοις) in 2.2, might point toward midrashic traditions concerning the hospitality of these ancient characters.[12] In that case, Rahab's generosity corresponds to the 'sister in need' just as Abraham's corresponds to the 'brother in need' (2.14). There is an inclusiveness of sorts here, even if Rahab is given neither the attention nor the explicit honor of the male exemplars.[13]

Perhaps a more interesting and fruitful way to pursue the question of explicitly gendered language and roles is to turn from designations to characterizations. Here we find something unexpected. The males who dominate the action within the composition do not necessarily act according to gender stereotypes.[14] Some males are indeed boastful (3.24; 4.16), are envious, competitive and cause social unrest

9 For the way in which these examples function literally in the composition, see L.T. Johnson, 'Mirror of Remembrance (James 1:22–25)', *CBQ* 50 (1988), pp. 632–45.

10 When Rahab meets the scouts, she recounts what she has heard about the Lord's deeds and confesses, 'For the Lord your God is he who is God in heaven above and on earth below' (Josh. 2.1). Her action of saving the scouts expresses this conviction. Her faith is also singled out for praise by Heb. 11.31, and examples of Abraham and Rahab are combined once more in *1 Clem.* 10 and 12.

11 For the celebration of Rahab as a proselyte and as an example of hospitality, see *b. Meg.* 14b–15a; *Mekilta on Exod.* 18.1; *Exod. R.* 27.4; *Num. R.* 3.3; 8.9; 16.1; *Deut. R.* 2.26–27; *Ruth R.* 2.1; *Song. R.* 1.3. 3; 1.15.2; 4.1.2; 6.2.3; *Eccl. R.* 5.6.1; 5.11.1; 8.10.1; Josephus, *Ant.* 5.5–30.

12 R.B. Ward, 'The Works of Abraham: James 2.14–26', *HTR* 61 (1968), pp. 283–90.

13 The figure of Rahab is the only aspect of gender in James touched on by S. Dowd, 'James', in C.A. Newsom and S.H. Ringe (eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 368–69.

14 For a guide to such 'gender stereotypes' in Hellenistic culture, see Xenophon, *Oecumenicus*, which praises women who are docile (7.10), discrete (7.14), who work indoors (7.22), who are trustworthy (7.41), fearful (7.25), temperate (9.10), loyal (9.12), affectionate (7.24). They are fitted to indoor work because they lack the physical strength of men (7.23); when they have a capacity to command, they are called 'manly minded' (10.1). In contrast, men are outdoor types because of their naturally greater strength (7.23); they also have courage (7.26), ambition (14.10), leadership qualities (21.7–8). It is appropriate for them to train extensively for war (11.12 and 17), exercise rule (13.10) and be able both to accuse and defend others in open forum (11.22). At least Xenophon pays attention to women. For an extreme androcentrism, see the discussion of 'Greatness of Soul' in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1123B–1125B.

(3.14–16), are among the richest oppressors (2.6–7; 5.1–6), are heedless in pursuit of financial gain (4.13–14), slander and curse their neighbors (3.9; 4.11), engage in war and murder (4.1–2). What unites all these behaviors is that they show such people to be 'friends of the world and enemies of God' (4.4). Other males within the composition exhibit qualities not stereotypically associated with masculinity. These are the ones James considers 'enemies of the world and friends of God'. Thus Abraham's faith in God is demonstrated by his willingness to give up what was most precious to him rather than to seize or secure it (2.21). Thus Job is praised not because of his conquest of suffering but for his endurance of it with patience (5.11). Thus Elijah is characterized as one who turns to the power of God in prayer rather than as one who is self-reliant and self-sufficient (5.17). The only mention of Jesus outside the greeting (1.1) associates him with the (scarcely dominant) attitude of faith (πίστις).

Notice further that it is the poor man rebuffed by the community who is declared the recipient of God's promise (2.5), just as God stands at the side of the righteous man to resist the arrogant oppressor (5.6),[15] just as God gifts with a harvest the farmer who waits patiently for the rain (5.7) and rewards with the crown of life the one who endures testing (1.12). These males who are 'friends of God' are depicted in terms that are more often stereotypically female: they are faithful, they defer, they endure, they pray, they wait, they sacrifice what they have been given.

James has little to say about leaders in the community, but what he does say follows the same pattern. He designates himself in 1.1 as a δοῦλος, and while in some contexts self-description as a slave can bear overtones of authority,[16] it is not an obviously self-aggrandizing title. James mentions teachers in 3.1, but only by way of warning: teachers do not dominate others but rather fall under harder judgments; they should therefore exemplify the 'wisdom from above' that is characterized by lowliness, meekness, reasonableness and every sort of peace-seeking (3.13–16). Finally, James speaks of the elders in 5.14, not with reference to their administration of the community or their command over others, but strictly in terms of their service. They are at the call of the sick, responding when they are summoned by the weakest and most marginal in any community to anoint their bodies with oil and pray over them and engage in mutual confession of sins (5.14–15). In sum, James represents a remarkable portrait of male leadership within the community, a portrait that shares with his depiction of males who are 'friends of God' qualities not of arrogance and control but attitudes of meekness and service.

This first approach to the composition leads to the conclusion that although James's language and focus are androcentric, his value system is one in which traits stereotypically associated with male patterns of aggressiveness and dominance are evil, while traits associated with stereotypical female patterns of passivity, patience and self-donation are good, even when expressed by males.

15 This interpretation depends on reading οὐκ ἀντιτάσσεται ὑμῖν in 5.6 as a question, with θεός as the implied subject, therefore rhetorically echoing the statement in 4.6, ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται; see L. Alonso-Shökel, 'James 5,2 [*sic*] and 4,6', *Bib* 54 (1973), pp. 73–76, and Johnson, *Letter of James*, p. 305.

Sexual Imagery

James uses explicit sexual imagery in two passages, with the interpretation of each uncertain and disputed. The first occurs after the macarism of 1.12 that assures those who endure testing that they will receive the promised crown of life:

> (13) Let no one when tested say, 'I am being tempted by God'. For God is not tempted by evils. Nor does he himself tempt anyone. (14) Instead, each person, by being drawn away and lured, is tempted by his own desire (ἐπιθυμίας). (15) Then the desire (ἐπιθυμία), once it has conceived (συλλαβοῦσα), brings forth sin (τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν). And when sin is brought to term (ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα), it gives birth to death (ἀποκύει θάνατον).

The use of female sexual imagery is obvious and powerful and negative, leading in a rhetorical climax from conception to full term of pregnancy to a birth that is, in shocking reversal, a death. Two cultural conventions support the imagery. The first is the feminine gender of the noun ἐπιθυμία, which enables a female personification according to the conventions of the Wisdom tradition, in which the wise man is seduced by the 'foreign woman'.[17] The second is the strong connotations that attach themselves to the noun ἐπιθυμία in Hellenistic moral discourse: although it can be used for any sort of 'desire', whether positive or negative, more frequently it is used negatively, and with specifically sexual dimension.[18]

What should we make of this female personification? J.L.P. Wolmarans argues that it has direct gender implications.[19] Using passages in Philo and Paul that he says subordinate the lower (female) passions to the higher (male) reason, Wolmarans thinks that James has in mind the same sort of subordination of the sensual and unreliable feminine to the reasonable and steady masculine.[20] He says that desire is here cast in feminine terms as a deliberate contrast to (masculine) reason in 1.18.[21] He combines this text with Jas 4.4 (the second to use sexual imagery):

> You adulteress (μοιχαλίδες)![22] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world is established as an enemy of God.

16 See D.B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 50–61.

17 Above all Prov. 2.16–22; 5.15–23, and especially 7.5–27. See C.A. Newsom, 'Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1–9', in P.L. Day (ed.), *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), pp. 142–60.

18 For extensive documentation, see Johnson, *Letter of James*, pp. 193–94.

19 'Male and Female Sexual Imagery: James 1:14–15, 18', *Acta Patristica et Byzantia* 5 (1994), pp. 134–41.

20 Wolmarans, 'Male and Female Sexual Imagery', p. 136.

21 Wolmarans, 'Male and Female Sexual Imagery', pp. 137–38.

22 Some MSS (the second hand of Sinaiticus, P, the Koine tradition) add μοιχοὶ καί to the beginning of the line, making 'you adulterers and adulteresses!' While we might applaud the even-mindedness of this reading, it is probably an addition (lacking, e.g., in the original hand of Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, the Old Latin and the Peshitta, as well as other Greek witnesses), based on a literal rather than a metaphorical understanding of the passage.

Wolmarans thinks that characterizing sinners as female sexual offenders is consistent with the sexual personification of desire and sin in 1.15.[23] Assuming that James is a second-century composition, Wolmarans moves directly to the conclusion that such language functions in support of a developing patriarchal church and the suppression of women.[24]

I must delay until the next section the main reason why Wolmarans's overall conclusions about James are wrong. But his reading of the sexual imagery itself is faulty on several counts. First, his use of Philo and Paul is inadequate.[25] Second, even if he were correct in his estimation of James's language, he would not be justified in moving directly from sexual characterization to social roles: the relation between cultural scripts – even clear ones – and real life is never so simple. Third, his appreciation for the language itself is too literal and limited.

The image of conception and birth in 1.15 is a powerful one, but it is, after all, one of many such metaphors in this remarkably compressed composition. Already before this verse, James has compared doubting people to waves of the sea driven and tossed by the wind (1.7), and the rich person to a flower of the field that withers and falls (1.11); later, James will speak of the tongue as a consuming fire and as a 'world of wickedness' in the body (3.5–6). Some of his metaphors derive from Torah,[26] some from the commonplaces of Hellenistic rhetoric,[27] some may be his own crafting. But they are metaphors that resist literalization. Wolmarans succeeds in clumsily literalizing the metaphor when he argues that James is trying to reject 'illicit' sexual relations (presumably initiated by females) and 'licit' sexual relations (initiated by males) and thereby reinforces patriarchal values.

The use of female language for desire is also metaphorical, shaped, as I have suggested, by the grammatical gender of ἐπιθυμία, its sexual associations in rhetoric, and the sapiential tradition of the seductive woman. Note that in his only other use of a cognate term, James speaks of desire in terms of a coveting (ἐπιθυμέω) after possessions which, failing to secure its desire, turns to war and murder (4.2). Once more, desire leads to death, but in this case with no literal sexual connotations at all.

23 Wolmarans, 'Male and Female Sexual Imagery', p. 139.

24 Wolmarans, 'Male and Female Sexual Imagery', pp. 139–41.

25 It is difficult to know what to make of Wolmarans's careless citation of texts. He cites Rom. 7.5 to support his statement that 'Paul speaks of sinful desires that bear fruit for death' ('Male and Female Sexual Imagery', p. 136), but Paul there speaks of παθήματα rather than ἐπιθυμία, and nothing in the language of Rom. 7 connects to Wolmarans's theme of the 'immoral woman'. For that matter, neither do his citations from Philo. He cites *Op. Mund.* 152, but it should be 151; he cites *Cher.* 54ff. in support of his interpretation that Philo considers man's sensory perception to act as an immoral woman that victimizes male reason. The pertinent passage is actually 57, which contains a striking parallel to the image used by James, but in no manner is it connected to a sexually 'immoral woman'. Philo's treatment of Eve in these passages is both more complex, and (from our contemporary perspective) sadder, than Wolmarans perceives.

26 The metaphor of the rich person as a flower of the field echoes Isa. 40.6–7, that of wealth being eaten by moths, Job 13.28 and/or Isa. 51.8.

27 James's use of the metaphor of the bridle as a means of controlling the tongue (1.27; 3.3) is well attested in Greek moral discourse for controlling the passions (see Plato, *Phaedrus* 246B–247C) or speech (Philo, *Somn.* 2.165). Similarly, the metaphor of the tongue as a rudder (2.4) is found with reference to the control of moral behavior (Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 12.34; Lucian, *Double Indictment* 2; Philo, *Cher.* 36).

Even more striking, in 1.18 James uses the same verb for 'giving birth' (ἀποκυέω) with reference to God (named as 'father' [πατήρ] in 1.17): 'By his decision (βουλεθείς) he gave us birth (ἀπεκύησεν) through a word of truth, in order that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.' That a female image of maternity is attributed to a grammatically male θεός shows just how provocative and paradoxical James can be in his use of metaphorical language. It reminds us as well of the dangers of literalizing. No more than 'the father of lights' in 1.17 should be taken with reference to the physical appearance or limitation of θεός should his 'giving birth' be taken as an indication of God's gender. Similarly, the female grammatical gender of σοφία and the strong feminine associations with the personified figure of σοφία in the Wisdom tradition should not lead us to conclude that James is making a point about God's gender (1.3; 3.13–16). The importance of finding James using birth language in both 1.15 and 1.18 is that we thereby gain some clue to his real point.

The first chapter of James – indeed the entire composition – is structured by the polar opposition between the way of life measured respectively by the world, and by God.[28] The contrast between 1.15 and 1.18 is not between modes of sexual activity, but between what is 'given birth' respectively by these measures. God is neither tempted by evils nor does God tempt others (1.13); instead, God is the source of every good and perfect gift (1.17). God's birthing through the word of truth – whether James means here the word of creation, Torah or the gospel[29] – brings forth humans who can represent (as 'first fruits') all God's creatures (1.18). In contrast, those who live apart from God's measure are seduced and lured by 'their own desires' (the ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας in 1.14 is emphatic) rather than by the 'will of God' (1.18). These desires issue in the dreadful murder of other creatures through word and through deed. For James, it is a matter of which source and reality one recognizes, by which measure one lives. It is a matter of friendship, or, in the terms of the Torah, of covenantal loyalty.

It is for this reason that James uses the female μοιχαλίδες ('you adulteress') in 4.4 in his charge against those choosing to live by the 'wisdom from below' rather than the 'wisdom from above' (3.13–16). It is not, as Wolmarans says, that 'he exhibits suspicion of the female; women are dangerous'. The language has nothing to do with actual women, for clearly it is men who are doing the violence in 4.1–13. Rather, James is using the conventional language of the prophets to express infidelity to the covenant. If the lord is bound by covenant to Israel as a husband is to a wife, then Israel's infidelity to the covenant is appropriately imaged as adultery.[30] And so here.

The first two ways of questioning the composition have had equivocal results. James's gender language is androcentric as is his choice of moral exemplars. The use of Rahab and of the 'sister in need' breaks the pattern, but not decisively. We have seen, however, that James's perspective on gender roles is not stereotypically patriarchal. While his bad males are active and aggressive and boastful, his good males

28 For James's use of polar oppositions throughout the composition, see T.B. Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora: Discursive Structure and Purpose in the Epistle of James* (SBLDS, 144; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); for the oppositions in Jas 1, see Johnson, *Letter of James*, pp. 174–76.

29 For discussion, see Johnson, *Letter of James*, pp. 197–98, 205.

30 See, e.g., Isa. 54.4–8; 57.3; LXX Ps. 72.27; Jer. 3.6–10; 13.27; Hos. 3.1; 9.1; Ezek. 16.38; 23.45.

exhibit the traits of acceptance, gentleness, patience, self-sacrifice and service. And while his use of sexual imagery may at first be seen as sexist, a closer examination of his metaphors shows that he is far from such an attitude. Indeed, his language about God giving birth and his association of σοφία with God suggest that his sense of gender is both fair and flexible. These ambiguous conclusions prepare for the last and perhaps most helpful way of approaching James on the issue of gender.

The Egalitarian Perspective of James

A third way of inquiring into James's testimony on gender is to compare the overall voice of the composition to other writings in the Wisdom tradition. Such a comparison is justified both by the sapiential character of the composition and by its explicit thematic attention to σοφία (1.5; 3.13–16).[31] Noticing the absence in James of elements that are standard – even dominant – in other Wisdom literature helps us locate its distinctive outlook. It is not surprising, for example, that James should use kinship language, for it is found everywhere in Wisdom literature. But what does give pause is that James lacks any *generational* kinship language such as is found even in the letters of Paul. In James, we find nothing of the transferred sense of 'father/son' relations that dominate the genre from the *Instruction of Vizier Ptah-Hotep* to the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.[32] James does not claim to be the 'father' of his readers in the way that Paul sometimes does (1 Cor. 4.14–17; Gal. 4.19; 1 Thess. 2.11); he is simply the δούλος of the God who is alone 'father' of all creatures (1.17–18, 27). The absence of this register of language is of first importance, for, when exhortation is framed as from 'father to son', the very structure of communication tends to privilege males over females.

Even more unusual, James has none of the conventional concern for generations even within the natural household. In fact, the οἶκος as a social institution does not come within the range of James's concern, which is entirely dedicated to the intentional community he calls the ἐκκλησία (5.14). As a consequence, James entirely lacks the attention given to marriage in virtually all Wisdom literature, attention that serves to locate women within the household and in subordination to males.[33] Indeed, in contrast to most Wisdom literature, which exhorts the individual to

31 Some of the basis for such a comparative approach is given by J.G. Gammie, 'Paraenetic Literature: Toward the Morphology of a Secondary Genre', *Semeia* 50 (1990), pp. 41–77, and L.G. Perdue, 'The Social Character of Paraenesis and Paraenetic Literature', *Semeia* 50 (1990), pp. 14–27, and some of the evidence given here appears as well in L.T. Johnson, 'The Social World of James: Literary Analysis and Historical Reconstruction', in L.M. White and O.L. Yarbrough (eds.), *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 180–97.

32 Note how Pseudo-Isocrates, *Demonicus*, plays on the convention that advice is communicated from 'father to son' (1–3, 9–10).

33 For discussions of marriage, see *Sentences of Syriac Menander* 45–51, 118–22; *Instruction of Prince Hor-Dedef*; Sir. 7.25–26; 26.1–9, 13–18; 40.19; Prov. 5.15–20; 31.10–31; *Instruction of Vizier Ptah-Hotep* 320–40; *Counsels of Wisdom* (Obverse 23); *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 3, 179–97; 201–206; *Sentences of Sextus* 235–39; *Instruction of Ani* 3.1; 8.4; 9.1; 1 Cor. 7.1–24; Col. 3.18–25; Eph. 5.21–6.4; 1 Thess. 4.4–5; 1 Tim. 2.9–15; Tit. 2.3–5; Heb. 12.34; 1 Pet. 3.1–7.

virtue,[34] James's concern is addressed to the community as such. Individual cases are cited only for illustration. Equally unusual, this composition is entirely devoted to moral behavior and pays no attention to manners at all.[35]

The largest part of James's moral concern is with the use of possessions and the use of speech; both topics are well represented in the Wisdom genre. James is distinctive, however, in giving no attention at all – apart from citing the commandment, 'do not commit adultery' (2.11) – to sexual behavior.[36] James does not take up the subject of the care of disciplining of children,[37] a topic taken up by at least some New Testament writings (see Col. 3.20–21; Eph. 6.1–3). In short, the topics that have to do with the establishing of the civic and domestic social order are absent from this writing, and since in antiquity this social order invariably subordinated women, such studied silence is not insignificant for our topic, and it is the final reason why Wolmarans's construal of James's sexual imagery is more than improbable: nothing in the letter otherwise supports such a reading, and everything argues against it.

We can take the elements absent from James together with his specific emphases and combine them in an attempt to locate James's distinctive kind of Wisdom, together with its implications for the question of gender.

First, James is concerned with morals rather than manners. Virtually all Wisdom literature devotes substantial attention to getting along in the social world as it is traditionally defined. James has nothing about such 'knowing and keeping one's place'. He says nothing about obedience to rulers, gratitude to benefactors, reverence toward the elderly, reciprocal generosity to friends. He has no interest in table manners, courtesy or conformity. In Wisdom literature both Jewish and Greek, honor and shame function as powerful motivations for behavior in conformity with the established order.[38] Note that apart from one paradoxical usage (2.5), James utterly lacks such honor-and-shame language. He is concerned not with conformity to the customs of the world but with moral choices that conflict with many of those

34 In the Bible, see Proverbs, Sirach, Qoheleth. In other literature, see *Instruction of Vizier Ptah-Hotep* (*ANET* 412–14); *Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re* (*ANET* 414–18); *Instruction of Amen-Em-Opet* (*ANET* 421–24); *Counsels of Wisdom* (*ANET* 426–27); *Words of Ahikar* (*ANET* 427–30); *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides; To Demonicus; Sentences of Sextus; Sentences of Syriac Menander.* A partial exception is the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.*

35 Contrast Prov. 23.1–9; Sir. 4.27–31; 7.14; 9.18; 31.1–20; 32.1–9; *Words of Ahikar* X, 142ff; *Counsels of Wisdom* 20; *Sentences of Syriac Menander* 11–14, 57–62, 99–101, 148–53, 181–84; *To Demonicus* 15, 20, 27, 41; *Sentences of Sextus* 149, 157, 164, 252, 265; *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 81–82, 98, 123, 147–48, 156–58, 211–12; *Instructions of Vizier Ptah-Hotep* 139; *Instruction of Amen-Em-Het* 1, 4–5; *Instruction of Ani* 6.1; 7.7; *Instruction of Amen-Em-Opet* 9, 23.

36 Compare *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 3, 198; Sir. 7.24–25; 9.1–9; 25.21–26; 26.11–12; Prov. 2.16–21; 6.24–32; 7.10–17; 9.13–18; *To Demonicus* 15, 21; *Sentences of Sextus* 60, 67, 70, 71, 73, 75, 102, 139, 240, 346, 449; *Testament of Reuben* 4.1–6.5; *Sentences of Syriac Menander* 170–72, 240–49; *Instruction of Ani* 3.13.

37 See *Words of Ahikar* 6.79; 7.106; 9.138; *To Demonicus* 14, 16; *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 207–17; Prov. 19.1–8; 13.1–2; 30.11–14; Sir. 3.1–16; 7.28; 16.1–5; 30.1–6; *Sentences of Sextus* 254, 256–57; *Sentences of Syriac Menander* 5–6, 9–10, 20–24, 94–98, 194–212; *Instruction of Vizier Ptah-Hotep* 565–95; *Instruction of Meri-Ka-Re* 55–60; *Instruction of Ani* 7.17.

38 See B.J. Malina and J.H. Neyrey, 'Honor and Shame in Luke–Acts: Pivotal Values in the Mediterranean World', in J.H. Neyrey (ed.) *The Social World of Luke–Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 25–66, and especially D. DeSilva, *The Hope and Glory: Honor Discourse and New Testament Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

customs. His Wisdom is subversive rather than supportive of the social structures and symbols of society.

The implications for gender are real. James is not concerned with the adornment and clothing of women; indeed, the only character dressed opulently and adorned with jewelry in this text is a man (2.2). Women are simply not, for James, a 'special problem' needing control by males. They may be in need, just like men (2.14). They may also be moral agents, just like men (2.25). By focusing on moral action challenging to 'the world', James cuts the ground from under all the ways of thinking about women in terms of decency and conformity.

Second, James addresses an intentional community rather than a household. This point follows naturally from the last: the reason why James lacks all attention to household duties and the covenantal roles assigned within the οἰκονομία of antiquity is that he is concerned exclusively with the ἐκκλησία, a congregation of moral agents drawn together by shared values, summarized in the shorthand of 'the faith in Jesus Christ' (2.1). The community has both male and female members, but James lacks any of the tension that we find in Paul between the (egalitarian) standards established by baptism ἐν χριστῷ and the social experience of the οἶκος. If women are therefore to be defined in terms of their moral agency rather than in terms of their biological or social roles, then generativity is a matter of moral choice for both males and females. Men can be self-seduced and be adulteresses, just as a woman who is a πόρνη can show faith through hospitality, just as a θεός can by his will give birth by a truthful word to truth-dealing humans.

Third, James is egalitarian rather than authoritarian. The kinship language in this composition, as I have noted, is entirely egalitarian. The readers are 'brothers and sisters' not only to each other but to the author as well. He does not assume any paternal authority, nor does he recognize such authority in others. The teachers and elders within the community, as we have seen, may be male, but they are defined in terms of service. James does not single out any class of people within the community. All alike are called to covenantal loyalty, to 'friendship with God' (4.4; 2.23). Each is responsible for the correction of others when they stray from the way of truth (5.20). The egalitarian outlook of James is shown also in his emphatic rejection of προσωπολημψία, or partiality in judging (2.1, 9), as well as all kinds of boasting (3.14–15; 4.16) and all forms of arrogance (4.6, 10). This composition is hostile toward the rich who use their wealth to oppress others (1.11; 2.5–7; 5.1–6). It condemns the slanderous speech and slighting judgments that assume the moral superiority of one member over another (4.11–12). It need scarcely be argued that social arrangements that place some in authority over others, whatever the overt basis, tend to favor the large, the strong, the mobile, the aggressive, the loud, the male. Women are more often than not among the oppressed, not only economically but also in terms of moral valuation. An outlook that refuses to establish a fixed structure of authority or a system of mediation in which some funnel authority and benefits to others, but which assigns equal moral worth and responsibility to all, is profoundly liberating for both men and women.[39]

39 My points here are in fundamental agreement with those expressed succinctly by L.W. Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), pp. 222–24.

Fourth, James is communitarian rather than individualistic. This composition does not teach an ethics of individual perfection that redounds to the honor of its practitioner. James calls on individuals only insofar as their single-mindedness is required to build and support the *ethos* of the community. James vigorously opposes any sort of individualism that seeks gain at the expense of another. He condemns that 'friendship with the world' that is built on envy and leads to every sort of rivalry, competitiveness, social unrest, war and murder. He seeks instead a community of solidarity, based not on the logic of envy but on the logic of gift-giving and mercy (1.5, 17; 2.13; 4.6). In 5.12–20 in particular, James sketches a community whose speech and action express such collaboration and solidarity, nowhere more powerfully than in the gathering of the church in response to the summons of its weakest members, to touch healingly, to pray and mutually to confess to sins. The pertinence of such a vision for the issue of gender is patent. By his rejection of the way of the world and his construction of an alternative community ethos, James points to the possibility of thinking and acting about gender in ways that are not based on power but on presence, that are not a matter of competition but of cooperation, that live life not as a battle between haves and have-nots in which the one who dies with the most toys wins, but as a festival of gift-giving, in which humans show themselves to be the 'first fruits' of creation: by imitating the God who birthed them.

When Is a Prostitute Not an Adulteress? The Language of Sexual Infidelity in the Rhetoric of the Letter of James

Timothy B. Cargal

For a paraenetic writing devoid of any sustained interest in addressing the ethics of human sexuality, the Letter of James places unusual emphasis on the language of sexual infidelity. With an entire Decalogue from which to draw examples of the requirements of God's 'law', the author chooses the prohibitions against adultery and murder (Jas 2.11). Having there conceded (just for the sake of argument?) that the readers have not committed adultery, the author later addresses them as 'adulteresses' (μοιχαλίδες, 4.4). This later epithet suggests that the choice of adultery from the Decalogue was hardly coincidental or haphazard – a suggestion reinforced by the use of sexually nuanced terms elsewhere in the letter. It is 'lustful desire' (ἐπιθυμία) that 'lures away and entices' (ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος) a person into sin and ultimately 'conceives' (συλλαβοῦσα) and 'gives birth' (τίκτει) to death (1.14–15). One should be concerned that one's religion is 'undefiled' before God (ἀμίαντος [1.27] the word used by Plutarch [*Numa* 9] for the 'virginal purity' of the Vestals, and of sexual purity in Wis. 3.13; 4.2; 8.19–20; Hebrews 13.4).[1] And the address of 'adulteresses' stands at the climax of a string of general accusations couched in sexually nuanced terms: ἡδονή, ἐπιθυμέω, ζηλόω (4.1–3). Within the rhetoric of the Letter of James, then, the language of sexual infidelity expresses the author's particular concern for readers' ethical failings.

It should be noted, however, that in both instances where the specific language of 'adultery' appears, questions have been raised concerning the peculiar ways these images of sexual infidelity are employed. Why is the usual order of murder and adultery within the Decalogue reversed?[2] Did the author really envision in 2.11 a cultural situation in which it is *more* likely one will find murderers than adulterers, as the phrasing, 'if you do not commit adultery but if you do murder', would seem to imply? Why did the author use the *feminine* vocative form to accuse the readers of adultery in 4.4 when every other vocative in the work is masculine? Why not at least, as some early copyists of the Letter subsequently did (א² P Ψ), include both the masculine and feminine vocative forms? Moreover, given this rhetorical strategy of using the imagery of sexual infidelity to underscore the seriousness of all ethical

1 Friedrich Hauck, 'ἀμίαντος', *TDNT* 4, p. 647.

2 Admittedly adultery does precede murder in some witnesses to the relevant passages from the Hebrew Bible. Patrick J. Hartin (*James* [SP, 14; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003], p. 123) noted the alternation in order among early Christian citations of the Decalogue is found in both the LXX manuscript tradition for Exod. 20.13–14 and Deut. 5.17–18 as well as secondary references to it (cf. Rom. 13.9 and Lk. 18.20 that have the same relative sequence as Jas 2.11 with Mk 10.19; Mt. 5.21, 27; 19.18 that follow the sequence of the Hebrew texts). Was the author simply following the LXX variant, or was this a deliberate rhetorical move?

failings, why – from all the many characters of the Hebrew Scriptures themselves and the standard compilations of exemplars of faithfulness drawn from them by contemporary writers (e.g. Hebrews 11 and *1 Clement* 9–12) – does the author choose to pair 'Rahab the prostitute' with Abraham (Jas 2.21–25)? And why, having enlisted Rahab as one of only two exemplars in a discussion of 'faith' and 'works', does the author make no mention at all of Rahab's profession of faith that lies at the very heart of the story about her and explicitly provides the motivation for her actions (see especially Josh. 2.9–13)?

These questions underscore the fact that all literary allusions introduce the dynamic of intertextuality. By such passing references, the author requires readers to supply the relevant information from the allusion to fill out the ideas in the text under construction. This allusive aspect of the language is most clearly seen by the references to the commandments from the Decalogue and the Rahab story, but it is also present in the author's address of the readers as 'adulteresses' as well. Since the readers are apparently not charged with literal adultery, then the author must presume a figurative understanding of 'adulteresses' shared by the imagined audience that would make sense of the vocative. But when the reference is so brief and the possible intertexts so broad, the first difficulty readers face is determining the pertinent aspects of the tradition to which the reference actually alludes. For example, the author of the Letter of James may have alluded specifically and only to the sections of Joshua that mention Rahab, or the reference might have been to the much more developed traditions about her in subsequent Jewish and Christian tradition. Most of the interpretation of the Letter assumes the latter, but since the author's intentions can never be securely known from such passing references readers are justified in exploring other interpretations opened by differently construing the intertexts.

Commentators have generally not been concerned to look for an intertext that might make sense of the role of the language of sexual infidelity in the overall rhetoric of the Letter of James but instead sought to interpret each appearance of such language in its isolated contexts.[3] A consequence of this approach has been that certain aspects of the usually chosen intertexts can actually pose problems in relation to the Letter's rhetoric elsewhere. But there is an intertext that opens possibilities for a more consistent reading of the rhetoric of sexual infidelity in the Letter, specifically the Wisdom literature's contrast between 'Woman Folly' and 'Woman Wisdom'.[4]

3 This tendency is hardly surprising given the dominance of form-critical approaches to the Letter in the wake of the publication of Martin Dibelius's landmark 'Meyers Kommentar' volume in 1921 (*Der Brief des Jakobus* [KEK, 15; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984 (1921)]). For the next sixty-odd years, interpreters were united in the view that the Letter lacked any coherence or structure beyond the occasional catchword links. Only with the application of redaction criticism and other linguistic and literary approaches to the Letter did this view begin to change. See my review of this history in Timothy B. Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora: Discursive Structure and Purpose in the Epistle of James* (SBLDS, 144; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 1–35.

4 For brief summaries of feminist interpretations of these tropes, see Carole R. Fontaine, 'Woman Folly (Foolish Woman)', in Carol Meyers, Ross S. Kraemer and Toni Craven (eds.), *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001 [reprinted from 2000 Houghton Mifflin edn]), pp. 543–44; *eadem*, 'Woman Stranger (Loose

To show the benefits of this intertext in interpreting the Letter as compared to other possibilities, I will explore the choice of intertexts made by interpreters of the Letter and the manner in which they have employed these intertexts to interpret the Letter's language of sexual infidelity beginning with the Rahab prooftext in Jas 2.25.

In the contemporaneous Jewish and Christian literature 'Rahab was celebrated as a proselyte and as a model of hospitality'.[5] It is just this pairing of faith (as a proselyte) and hospitality that is cited in Heb. 11.31, and whereas Jas 2.25 only explicitly mentions her hospitality ('she welcomed the messengers') the joining of her 'faith' with this 'work' is implicit from the argument in this segment of the Letter. Of these two strands in the Rahab tradition, her reputation for hospitality is usually singled out as this author's prime motivation for including her.[6] The importance of hospitality – the reception and care of 'a brother or sister' (ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφή, 2.15)[7] – as the supreme example of a 'work' that should necessarily arise from 'faith' has been a concern stretching back to 1.27 (see also 2.1–3, 14–17).

Interpreters drawing on this intertext usually note a kind of rhetorical balance achieved in the highly economical way in which Rahab and Abraham are paired as proofs of the argument regarding the inseparability of 'faith' and 'works'. Just as readers must recall Rahab's faith from its explicit and pivotal role in the account in Joshua and the subsequent Jewish and Christian traditions to fill out the explicit reference in the Letter to her hospitality, so readers must likewise recall Abraham's hospitality to fill out the explicit reference to his faith ('Abraham believed God' [ἐπίστευσεν ... τῷ θεῷ], 2.23, citing Gen. 15.6).[8] But if the author wishes to stress that the fundamental 'work' of 'faith' is hospitality, why state that Abraham's 'faith' was demonstrated 'when he offered his son Isaac on the altar' (Jas 2.21)? Why not parallel Rahab's hospitality to 'the messengers' (τοὺς ἀγγέλους, 2.25; this

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Woman/Adulteress)', in *Women in Scripture,* pp. 546–47; Claudia V. Camp and Anne McGuire, 'Woman Wisdom' in *Women in Scripture,* pp. 548–55. Jewish and Christian Wisdom literature is a theological category to which the Letter of James has often been assigned.

5 Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB, 37A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1995), p. 245, where he provides an extensive list of citations from the relevant Jewish literature, and pp. 248–49. See also Hartin, *James,* pp. 161–62; Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 132–33; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of their Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. 345–48; Pheme Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James and Jude* (IBC; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1995), p. 114; Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude* (AB, 37; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), p. 35; Robert W. Wall, *Community of the Wise: The Letter of James* (The New Testament in Context; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), pp. 142–48; and Roy Bowen Ward, 'The Works of Abraham: James 2.14–26', *HTR* 61 (1968), pp. 283–90.

6 Hartin, *James,* pp. 161–62; Johnson, *The Letter of James,* pp. 248–49; Reicke, *James, Peter and Jude,* p. 35; and Wall, *Community of the Wise,* pp. 152–57. Wall goes so far as to argue, 'In order to make more emphatic a definition of justification that values what the believer does over professions of faith alone, James edits out any explicit reference to Rahab's faith' (p. 155).

7 Although ἀδελφός appears 19 times in the Letter, this is the only occurrence of ἀδελφή. It seems likely the author explicitly mentions the possibility of a 'sister' within the current context because of the earlier mention of 'widows in their distress' at 1.27.

8 Ward, 'Works of Abraham', p. 286; cf. Martin Dibelius, *James* (Hermenia; rev. Helmut Greeven, trans. Michael A. Williams; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p. 161.

phrasing is drawn from Josh. 6.25, where Joshua refers to the spies rescued by Rahab as 'messengers', (המלאכים) with Abraham's hospitality to 'the angels' (המלאכים, Gen. 19.1) en route to Sodom (cf. Genesis 18)? Many recent commentators insist that the act of hospitality is implicit in the *Akedah* tradition. Isaac could not have been bound and 'offered on the altar' had he not first been born in fulfillment of the promise Abraham received in response to the hospitality he showed to his visitors (Gen.18.9–15).[9]

A significant difficulty with this interpretation is the demands it assumes the author placed on the anticipated readers.[10] The author would have chosen to highlight Abraham's *hospitality* by explicit reference to the *Akedah* tradition that then must be construed as primarily and indeed fundamentally the fulfillment of the promise of progeny given to Abraham by the men/angels he *entertained.* The only explicit textual indication that the 'Binding' story was to be read as fundamentally about hospitality rather than faith (which both was explicitly mentioned in Jas 2.22–23 and was the more obvious emphasis of the *Akedah* tradition as is clear from Hebrews 11.17–19) would be the fact that Rahab '*entertained*/welcomed the messengers' (ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους, 2.25). But such a scant textual marker scarcely seems sufficient clue of the author's intent in this regard. Moreover, given the already noted use of sexually nuanced language in the Letter to express harsh condemnation of ethical failings, one can only wonder why the one trait of 'Rahab *the prostitute*' to which the author sought to draw particular attention would be her *hospitality.*

Perhaps a better way to gain an understanding of Rahab's rhetorical role in the Letter is to attend to what the author explicitly adds to the traditional account of her involvement in the sack of Jericho. Specifically, the author gives equal emphasis to two separate, albeit closely related, acts or 'works': Rahab both 'entertained/welcomed the messengers *and sent them out by another road*' (καὶ ἑτέρᾳ ὁδῷ ἐκβαλοῦσα, 2.25). The detail of sending the men 'out by *another* road' does not perfectly fit the plot of Joshua 2, where Rahab abets their escape by lowering them through a window in the city's wall and directing them to wait in the hills before they go their 'way' (presumably the same 'way' they had initially come since Rahab there refers to it explicitly as 'your way', לדרככם, LXX εἰς τὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῶν; Josh. 2.15-16).[11] Nor, moreover, does the specific action of sending them 'out by another road' figure prominently in Rahab traditions subsequent to Joshua.

9 Davids, *James,* p. 127; Johnson, *Letter of James,* pp. 248–49; Wall, *Community of the Wise,* pp. 146–48; and Ward, 'Works of Abraham', pp. 286–90. See also Hartin, *James,* p. 160, who while generally sympathetic with this position believes it may read too much into the reference to Abraham's 'works': 'the plural "works" ... is more stylistic than factual'.

10 See also Sophie Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (HNTC; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 135. Consult also those recent commentators who see the link between Abraham and Rahab as nothing more than a carryover from traditional lists of exemplars of faith and righteous conduct: James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 128–34; Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC, 48; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), p. 97; Douglas J. Moo, *James* (TNTC, 16; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 116–17.

11 Martin, *James,* p. 96, citing F.W. Young, 'The Relation of Clement to the Epistle of James', *JBL* 67 (1948), pp. 339–45 (342).

This explicit mention of the 'road/way', rather than being simply a minor discrepancy, marks connections with other statements in the Letter.[12]

The word ὁδός occurs at only two other places within the Letter, in both instances with the connotation of 'manner/way of life' rather than the more basic meaning of 'road' or 'way' as in 2.25. Jas 1.6–8 describes one who doubts (ὁ διακρινόμενος) as being 'double-minded and unstable in every way' (ἀνὴρ δίψυχος, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ). The Letter concludes with the admonition that 'if anyone wanders from the truth' then he or she should be restored 'from the error of his [or her] way' (ἐκ πλάνης ὁδοῦ αὐτοῦ) in order to 'save his [or her; αὐτοῦ] soul from death and cover a multitude of sins' (5.19–20). I have elsewhere argued that those closing verses present the author's self-understanding and that linked with the opening of the Letter (particularly the designation of readers as the 'twelve tribes in the Dispersion' [i.e. those who are 'wandering']) describe the Letter's purpose. The readers have wandered from the truth as a result of their doubting, and so the author seeks through the course of the Letter to restore them from the error of their ways.[13] This particular use of the imagery of 'way' within the Letter suggests that by adding the detail that Rahab sent the messengers 'out by another way' the author may intend to present her as an example of one who acts on her faith to save herself and others.[14]

12 How much emphasis to place on the fact that in the Letter it is 'another' way rather than the spies' way in Joshua is difficult to say. The shift may be simply a byproduct of the shift from second-person reference in Rahab's direct discourse in Joshua to the third-person reference of the recounting of the story in the Letter. But a side-by-side comparison of the Book of Joshua with the Letter of James clearly shows the change.

13 Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora,* esp. pp. 45–51, 193–98, 216–18. Obviously there is not a direct verbal parallel between the description of the readers as 'in the Dispersion' (1.1) and the possibility that some among them might 'wander' from the truth (5.19). Although a technical term in the first century for Jews living outside of Palestine, the word διασπορά was the nominal form of a verb with the base meanings 'to scatter' or 'to be led away' (for the development of the uses of the word, see Karl Ludwig Schmidt, 'διασπορά', *TDNT* 2, pp. 99–104; James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St James* [ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916], pp. 118–27). It is this underlying meaning of 'led away' that provides the basis for the author's reinterpretation of the figure in terms of at least some of the readers wandering from the truth ('anyone among you wanders', 5.19) because they were 'lured and enticed' by their desires (1.14). See Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora,* pp. 47–49.

14 Already it may be noted that the actions admonished in Jas 5.19–20 are themselves ambiguous as to the scope of who is included among those 'saved from death'. The ambiguity is introduced by the pronoun αὐτοῦ that modifies ψυχήν. Is it the 'soul' of the 'sinner' (ἁμαρτωλόν) or of the one who performs the act of restoration (ὁ ἐπιστρέψας) that is saved? Some commentators identify the recipient of salvation as the wandering sinner (so Davids, *James,* pp. 200–201; Moo, *James,* p. 190; Martin, *James,* p. 220; Reicke, *James, Peter and Jude,* pp. 62–63), others conclude the promise of salvation applies to the sinner and the promise of forgiveness to both the sinner and restorer (so Dibelius, *James,* pp. 258–59; Laws, *James,* p. 239; Franz Mußner, *Der Jakobusbrief* [HTKNT, 13.1; Freiburg and Basel: Herder, 1964], p. 253; Ropes, *St James,* pp. 315–16), and still others attribute both promises only to the restorer (Adamson, *James,* pp. 202–204; Jean Cantinat, *Les Epîtres de Saint Jacques et de Saint Jude* [SB; Paris: Libraire Lecoffre, 1973], pp. 261–62). I have argued the ambiguity is deliberate and intended by the author to identify such acts of restoration as prime examples of being 'doers of the word' (cf. Jas 1.22–25) whereby both others and oneself receive the blessings of God (Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora,* pp. 197–98). That Rahab's actions save both herself and others (not only the messengers, but the members of her 'father's household' as well; Josh. 2.12–13) would be an example of just this pattern of belief. See Wall, *Community of the Wise,* p. 156.

To see how Rahab fulfills this rhetorical function in the Letter, it is necessary to summarize the process by which the author believes a person arrives at salvation[15] – a kind of narrative plot that can then be compared to Rahab's role in the plot of the Book of Joshua. Because the allusion to Rahab is so brief, we begin with the more developed process from the overall argument of the Letter so as to be able to identify the pertinent parallels with the Joshua account. One feature of the author's presentation of this process leading to salvation is that the narrative begins somewhat *in media res.* The author contends that a person must know that God is the source of 'every good and perfect gift' and of nothing bad or evil (1.17; it is precisely a belief that God might be a source of both good and bad things that leads to the 'double-mindedness' the author decries in 1.8), but nowhere in the Letter is the source of this initial knowledge identified.[16] Nevertheless, this knowledge of God as a source of nothing but good is the point from which the process unfolds.

The knowledge that God is pure good gives rise to 'faith', a trust that God will give what is needed (1.5–6), rather than 'doubt' (1.7–8), an uncertainty as to whether God will give what one needs or might even give something bad like 'temptation/trial' (πειρασμός, 1.13). What the author believes people most need is 'wisdom' (1.5), a knowledge of and insight into the practical application of divine will. Once this wisdom is received as a gift offered in response to a faithful request (1.5–6), it becomes within the faithful an 'implanted word' (1.21) that transforms their evil desires (1.14) into a desire to 'do the word' revealed in God's wisdom (1.22–25; cf. 3.13, 17–18). Specifically, they will do 'works' on behalf of others, for example, 'caring for orphans and widows' (1.27b) and meeting the needs of the indigent (2.15–17), that will extend God's goodness to those in need. Having in this way become 'doers of the word' (1.22), they will be 'blessed for/in their doing' (1.25) by being 'birthed by God' (1.18) and so have their 'souls saved from death' (1.21; 5.20).

With remarkable closeness, this process for arriving at salvation tracks with Joshua's narrative about Rahab. Joshua repeats Moses' act of sending spies into Canaan ahead of the Israelites (see Numbers 13–14), but rather than sending twelve spies to reconnoiter the whole of Canaan he limits the endeavor to two men to spy out Jericho (Josh. 2.1). Although a variety of strategic motivations have been offered for why the spies make their way to a brothel,[17] the most likely is that they were

15 The isolation of this process was a major component of my *Restoring the Diaspora,* esp. pp. 57–136, 202–204.

16 Does it come from those who 'restore' others, or does the Divine confer this knowledge either directly ('from the Father of lights', 1.17) or through a mediator ('the Lord Jesus Christ', 1.1; 2.1)? Other sources of this knowledge might also be possible (Scripture? Traditions held by the community?). I have argued that this omission strongly suggests the Letter was not an evangelistic document aimed at the conversion of non-Christians; rather, it is, in the language already cited from 5.19–20, aimed at restoring errant members of the author's Christian community. See Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora,* pp. 196–98, 205–206, 216–18.

17 It was a place that might preserve anonymity, not draw particular attention to outsiders, provide an opportunity to eavesdrop on local conversations, and/or perhaps locate individuals on the fringes of Canaanite society who would be sympathetic to their cause. See Phyllis A. Bird, 'The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts', *Semeia* 46 (1989), pp. 119–39 (126–32).

seeking the usual hospitalities of a prostitute.[18] The spies' presence in Jericho is reported to the king who sends orders for them to be turned over. Rahab deceives the king by hiding the men under stalks of flax on her rooftop and falsely reporting that they had already left the city (Josh. 2.4-6; she thus replicates the deceit of Egyptian midwives who hid the male Israelites from Pharaoh and thereby herself becomes a midwife to the birth of Israel).[19]

Rahab takes this extraordinary risk because of what she knows about God: 'I know that the Lord has given you the land, and ... [t]he Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below' (Josh. 2.8, 11b; cf. Jas 1.17; 2.19a). As in the process leading to salvation in the Letter of James, it is unclear precisely how Rahab has come by this knowledge. There have been reports among the Canaanites about Israel's miraculous deliverance from Egypt and victories in Trans-Jordan (Josh. 2.10). Her faith is thus rooted in God's miracles,[20] but how she came to see herself as a potential recipient of God's good gift of the land rather than being struck with dread at Israel's approach like other inhabitants of Jericho (Josh. 2.9; cf. 5.1) is unstated. Nevertheless, she acts on this knowledge of God's goodness both by asking for the deliverance she and her family need (Josh. 2.12–13; cf. Jas 1.6) and by abetting the spies' escape from Jericho and safe return to the Israelite camp.[21] Because Rahab saves the spies' lives, her life and the lives of her family are likewise ultimately saved (Josh. 2.17–21; 6.22–25; cf. Jas 1.21; 5.19–20).

The result of Rahab's actions for Israel suggests another remarkable connection between the Rahab tradition and the Letter of James. This story at the opening of the Book of Joshua parallels the earlier spy mission while at the same time inverting the results (Num. 13.8, 16b; 14.6–10). Because the Israelites had lacked the faith that God would give them the land and indeed wondered, 'Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword?' (Num. 14.3a), they had been condemned to wander in the wilderness until the Exodus generation should die (Num. 14.20–23). The same outcome is averted the second time by the spies' report: 'Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before us' (Josh. 2.24). This report is taken almost verbatim from the opening of Rahab's confession of faith (2.9), and this time 'they recognize the truth and do not suffer the fear that plagued the emissaries whom Moses had sent out a generation before'.[22] Or

18 So Danna Nolan Fewell, 'Joshua', in Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 63–66 (63), who remarks, 'The common argument that a brothel would have been the best place to secure information about the city only accents the fact that the spies neither ask questions nor eavesdrop on many conversations'. See also Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), p. 113 (citing Fewell); Tikva Frymer-Kensky, 'Rahab in the Hebrew Bible', in Meyers, Kraemer and Craven (eds.), *Women in Scripture*, pp. 140–41.

19 Bellis, *Helpmates*, p. 114; Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women*, p. 36. On the detrimental impact on women of even this more positive portrayal of the depiction of female deceptiveness that pervades the Hebrew Bible, see Esther Fuchs, 'Who Is Hiding the Truth? Deceptive Women and Biblical Androcentrism', in Adela Yarbro Collins (ed.), *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (SBLCP; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 137–44 (141, 143).

20 See also Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women*, pp. 37, 297.

21 Bird, 'Harlot as Heroine', p. 129.

22 Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women*, p. 298.

to employ phrasing from the Letter of James: to the 'twelve tribes in the Dispersion' (Jas 1.1), Rahab spoke the 'truth' about God's goodness from which they had 'wandered' and in so doing 'covered a multitude of sins' and 'saved' her own and also the Israelites' 'souls from death' (Jas 5.19–20).

At the core of the Rahab allusion even in the Letter of James, then, is her faith, not her hospitality. Her 'works' of 'welcoming the messengers and sending them out by another way' that ultimately saved her and her family's lives would not have been possible apart from her faith in God's goodness. Her profession of faith is not only the explicit motivation for her actions toward the spies but also the key to Canaan for the Israelites. She not only saves the spies' lives but also restores their faith and through them the faith of all Israel. To the degree that later tradition and interpretation present her story as an example of the proselyte who acts on her absolute faith in God's goodness, Rahab continues to live among the people of God 'until this day' (Josh. 6.25). Reducing her story to an object lesson in hospitality serves not to bolster her image but rather to re-inscribe her within the usual role of the prostitute. After all, prostitutes were stereotypically associated with running inns in antiquity,[23] and even today prostitution can be euphemistically referred to as part of 'the hospitality business'. The negative impact of emphasizing what Rahab shared in common with prostitutes is laid bare by the fact that, even as a proselyte, Rahab is construed, particularly among Protestant interpreters, as an extreme example of divine grace; not only is the *venerable* Abraham saved from among the nations by his faith, but *even* Rahab the Canaanite prostitute has been saved.[24]

What is important about 'Rahab the prostitute' within the rhetoric both of the Book of Joshua and subsequently of the Letter of James is not an extraordinary extent of divine grace in redeeming her but how her redemption is typical of the way God acts. As Frymer-Kensky observed:

> Just as her pious behavior reverses expectations of how prostitutes act, so her elevation is a reversal of the normal expectations for a prostitute's future. YHWH interrupts normative societal expectations by exalting the prostitute just as YHWH interrupted expectations by choosing the younger sons and freeing the slaves. The saving of Rahab is part of and an example of God's nature and Israel's mission.[25]

This rhetorical function of the 'harlot as heroine' role, as Phyllis Bird has shown, is both inherently dependent upon the negative social and literary assumptions about prostitutes that it contravenes and 'also a recognizable subtype of the harlot in literature (and presumably also in life), a romantic antitype to the dominant image: the whore with the heart of gold'.[26] What differentiates Rahab in particular from the usual harlot-type is her 'display of loyalty, courage and altruism' arising from 'either

23 Bird, 'Harlot as Heroine', pp. 127–28, 136.

24 Frymer-Kensky (*Reading the Women,* pp. 347–48) discusses this interpretation as part of 'the later development of Christian theology ... [a]s "grace" became ever more important in the history of salvation', citing in particular Calvin's emphasis on Rahab's prostitution as proof of the expansiveness of God's grace by faith (*Commentary on Hebrews,* 11.31). For the same contrast among recent commentators on the Letter of James, see Adamson, *James,* pp. 133–34; Laws, *James,* p. 138; Martin, *James,* p. 97; Moo, *James,* pp. 116–17; Ropes, *St James,* pp. 224–25.

25 Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women,* p. 44.

26 Bird, 'Harlot as Heroine', p. 131 and nn. 35–36 on p. 136 where she cites examples.

faith or discernment, or both'.[27] In drawing the image of the type to which Rahab provides the counter-type, Bird relies primarily on a socio-historical investigation of prostitution in the ancient Near East.[28] But there is another type of the prostitute found in Jewish and Christian Wisdom literature (a theological category to which the Letter of James is often assigned), namely, 'Woman Folly' who is the anti-type of 'Woman Wisdom'.

In the established literary trope, the depictions of Woman Folly's sexual infidelities include both prostitution and adultery,[29] not infrequently combining elements of both (e.g., Prov. 7.5 where a warning about the 'loose woman'/'adulteress' [so NRSV; אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נׇכְרִיָּה, LXX γυναικὸς ἀλλοτρίας καὶ πονηρᾶς] subsequently describes her as decked out like a 'prostitute' [זוֹנָה, LXX πορνικόν] in 7.10). Folly is often depicted as the 'foreign woman' (אִשָּׁה זָרָה or נׇכְרִיָּה LXX γυνὴ ἀλλότρια or πόρνη; Prov. 2.16–19; 5.3–14; 6.24–26; 7.5–27; 22.14; 23.27–28), who out of 'xenophobic fear' was 'thought to be ripe for sexual misconduct, and [whose] behavior threatens group norms concerning ethnicity, inheritance practices, and sexual standards'.[30] There were legal and social distinctions drawn between prostitutes and adulteresses in both ancient Israel and the first-century Mediterranean contexts,[31] but these distinctions were not pertinent to defining the character of Woman Folly. To describe her as a prostitute was to describe her as an adulteress, and vice versa, because she defied all the established norms of sexual fidelity and indeed all ethical and religious norms.

Woman Folly and Woman Wisdom are intrinsically linked as contrasting images like the opposite sides of a coin.[32] One of the clearest examples of the 'evil twin' relationship of Woman Folly to Woman Wisdom is found in the parallel passages of Prov. 9.1–6 on Wisdom and 9.13–18 on Folly.[33] In both instances the women call out 'from the high places of the town' to the 'simple' and 'those without sense' to come and accept their hospitality (although Wisdom does so [more decorously?] by means of 'her servant-girls', נַעֲרֹתֶיהָ, LXX τοὺς ἑαυτῆς δούλους; 9.3). Woman Wisdom's hospitality is represented by the invitation, 'Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed' (9.5), while from Woman Folly such an invitation

27 Bird, 'Harlot as Heroine', p. 131; cf. Bellis, *Helpmates,* p. 114; Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women,* pp. 35, 44.

28 Bird, 'Harlot as Heroine', pp. 120–22, 127–28.

29 See Fontaine, 'Woman Folly', p. 543; *eadem,* 'Woman Stranger', pp. 546–47; and *eadem,* 'Prostitute (Prov. 6:26; 7:10; 23:27; 29:3)', in Meyers, Kraemer and Craven (eds.), *Women in Scripture,* pp. 304–306.

30 Fontaine, 'Woman Stranger', p. 546.

31 See Elaine Adler Goodfriend, 'Adultery', *ABD* 1, pp. 82–86; and *eadem,* 'Prostitution (Old Testament)', *ABD* 5, pp. 505–10; Friedrich Hauck, 'μοιχεύω, μοιχάω, μοιχεία, μοῖχος, μοιχαλίς', *TDNT* 4, pp. 729–34; *idem* and Siegfried Schulz, 'πόρνη, πόρνος, πορνεία, πορνεύω, ἐκπορνεύω', *TDNT* 6, pp. 579–94 (579–86).

32 Fontaine suggests that the origins of this relationship lie in the 'bifurcation ... into "good" and "evil" categories' of the connections of Sumerian, Egyptian and Canaanite goddesses both with fertility and life-giving on the one hand and death and the underworld on the other ('Woman Stranger', p. 546).

33 Fontaine, 'Woman Folly', p. 543. The passages parallel each other so closely that they contain exactly the same number of strophes, and (apart from the addition of a conjunctive *waw* and a *waw*-conversive) the central strophes agree verbatim (cf. 9.4 with 9.16).

becomes a euphemism for sexual infidelity: 'Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant' (9.17).[34] The one who accepts Woman Wisdom's invitation shall 'live, and walk in the way of insight' (9.6), but Woman Folly's 'guests are in the depths of Sheol' (9.18).

Rahab, the *Canaanite prostitute,* would seem a perfect candidate for typecasting to portray Woman Folly/Strange ('foreign') Woman, and yet her role in both Scripture and tradition has far more in common with Woman Wisdom. Her traditional roles as ideal proselyte and model of hospitality comport well with Woman Wisdom's role as one who calls people to turn back to the way of God and who uses hospitality to entice them to do so. Reading Jas 2.25 in light of Proverbs would suggest that the reference to Rahab's having 'welcomed the messengers' is thus subordinate to her then more important act of having 'sent them out by another road'. Just as Woman Wisdom uses hospitality as a *means* to draw people onto the 'way of insight' (בדרך בינה, LXX γνώσει σύνεσιν) to the proper *end* that they might live, so Rahab's welcoming of the messengers is the means she employs to the end of redirecting the spies and ultimately all the Israelites to 'another road/way'.

Rahab's allusive role as Woman Wisdom in the Letter of James could also be at play in the opening reference to her: 'was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works?' (ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη). The line recollects the aphorism from the Jesus tradition, 'Yet wisdom is vindicated [justified] by her deeds' (καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς; Mt. 11.19b). That this aphorism was commonly understood as reflecting the personification of wisdom as a woman is clearly demonstrated by the Lukan parallel that reads: 'wisdom is vindicated by all her children' (πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς; Lk. 7.35).[35] The author of this Letter was well acquainted with the Jesus-saying tradition (most likely in some pre-canonical gospel form like Q) and made wide use of it,[36] so it is quite plausible that the author recalled – and anticipated the readers would recall – this aphorism by the mention of a woman 'justified/vindicated by her works/deeds'. If this aphorism does indeed lie in the background to Jas 2.25, then every aspect of the reference to Rahab in that verse can be accounted for by a reading of Rahab as Woman Wisdom.

Such a reading also provides additional insight into the use of the language of sexual infidelity elsewhere in the Letter. Some commentators note the relationship between the Letter's description of 'the wisdom from above' and the trope of Woman Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and Wisdom 7,[37] drawing particular attention to the

34 Quite possibly sexual innuendo, albeit construed as within a proper relationship and so positively valued, was already implicit in Woman Wisdom's call as well; cf. Prov. 5.15–23.

35 Some MSS of Mt. 11.19, under influence of the Lukan parallel, also read 'by her children'; see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971; corrected edn, 1975), p. 30.

36 Peter H. Davids, 'James and Jesus', in David Wenham (ed.), *The Jesus Tradition outside the Gospels* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), pp. 63–84; Dibelius, *James,* pp. 28–29; Patrick J. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (JSNTSup, 47; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); Johnson, *Letter of James,* pp. 55–57; Manabu Tsuji, *Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung: Eine Untersuchung zur literarischen Gestalt und zur inhaltlichen Kohärenz des Jakobusbriefes* (WUNT, 2. Reihe, 93; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1997), pp. 118–32.

37 Laws, *James,* p. 164; Martin, *James,* p. 126.

fact that 'purity' (ἁγνή)[38] is given special emphasis at the head of the list of virtues typical of wisdom's actions (3.17). Perhaps, then, the so-called wisdom that is 'earthly, unspiritual, devilish' (ἐπίγειος, ψυχική, δαιμονιώδης; 3.15) and is typified by the sexually nuanced terms ψυχική (that Dibelius proposed should be translated 'sensual' [*sinnlich*][39]), ζῆλος ('envy' or 'jealousy') and ἐριθεία ('self-seeking'; this word was used by Symmachus of 'the harlot who offers herself to a man or who entices him' to describe 'the attitude of self-seekers, harlots, etc. ... who, demeaning themselves and their cause, are busy and active in their own interests'[40]) might call to mind Woman Folly in the contrast with genuine 'wisdom from above'.

Such an allusion to Woman Folly here coupled with the sexually nuanced terms in the intervening verses (4.1–3: ἡδονή, ἐπιθυμέω, ζηλόω) suggests a different way of understanding the address of the readers as 'adulteresses' (μοιχαλίδες, 4.4). The commonly held view is that the author here, and only here, uses just the feminine vocative to link the image with the prophetic trope of Israel as God's unfaithful wife, transferred to the church via the early Christian imagery of it as the 'bride of Christ'.[41] But the address may also be read as an allusion to Woman Folly, a possibility John Schmitt suggests with specific reference to Prov. 30.20:

> The ὁδὸς γυναικὸς μοιχαλίδος ('the way of an adulterous woman') is that 'having washed herself from her deed, she says she has done nothing wrong' (ἄτοπον, 'out of place, unnatural') ... The point for James is not just the idea of infidelity, but also the style of the sinner. She commits her deed and feels no remorse. She is detached from any consequence of her evil ways. This sinner has lost, or is suppressing, the moral sensitivity that should characterize a friend of God.[42]

The author of the Letter would then invoke a usual appellative for Woman Folly both to portray the impunity with which readers are accused of acting in 4.1–3 and to call them to repentance in 4.5–10. Rather than continuing with Woman Folly in 'friendship with the world [and] enmity with God' (4.4), they should return to Woman Wisdom and friendship with God (cf. 2.23).

Deciding between these two tropes as the possible origin of the author's choice of address is difficult, and the author is perhaps deliberately ambiguous. What is certain

38 A word used by Josephus (*Apion* 2.198) and Hesychius to refer to a lack of ritual defect arising from sexual intercourse. Friedrich Hauck ('ἁγνός', *TDNT* 1, p. 122) noted, 'The originally purely external religious concept ... acquires a more ethical and inward significance'.

39 Dibelius, *James,* p. 210; cf. Laws, *James,* p. 163.

40 Friedrich Büchsel, 'ἐριθεία', *TDNT* 2, pp. 660–61 (661).

41 Cf. Dibelius, *James,* p. 220; Davids, *James,* pp. 160–61; Martin, *James,* p. 141; Cantinat, *Jacques et Jude*, p. 201; and numerous others. The explanation is so common that Metzger (*A Textual Commentary,* pp. 682–83) utilizes it in arguing against the text witnesses that expand the vocative to include both masculine and feminine forms.

42 John J. Schmitt, 'You Adulteresses! The Image in James 4.4', *NovT* 28 (1986), pp. 327–37 (336). Schmitt goes too far, however, in rejecting any possibility that the vocative might allude to the prophetic trope of Israel as God's adulterous wife by questioning whether such 'marital symbolism between God and Israel' ever existed. For his critique of the prophetic trope, see 'You Adulteresses!', pp. 331–34; *idem,* 'The Gender of Ancient Israel', *JSOT* 26 (1983), pp. 115-25. I am unconvinced by this part of his argument, particularly as it relates to Hosea (see 'You Adulteresses!', p. 333; 'Gender of Ancient Israel', pp. 119–23).

is that the author accuses the readers of infidelity in their 'friendship with God' (possibly an implied marriage covenant, following the prophetic trope) in sexual terms. This nuance continues in the statement, 'God yearns jealously for the spirit that God has made to dwell in us' (4.5),[43] an echo of the earlier image of God's 'purpose [to give] us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of God's creations' (1.18). By using the accusation that readers 'commit murder' because they 'want something and do not have it' (4.2) as one ground for labeling them 'adulteresses', the author echoes the earlier association of adultery and murder (2.11).[44]

Although it has been suggested that the author of the Letter chose the prohibitions of murder and adultery because the second table of the Decalogue was traditionally associated with Lev. 19.18 ('You shall love your neighbor as yourself', cited in Jas 1.8),[45] the recurrence of the language of sexual infidelity and the threefold repetition of the charge of murder (2.11; 4.2; 5.6) indicate the author's choice of these particular commandments was not coincidental. Nor is the relative sequence of 'adultery' and 'murder' simply the result of following a manuscript tradition that varies from the Masoretic Text.[46] The argument is structured as, 'If you do not do *x* but do *y*, then ...'. Since this portion of the Letter begins to build the case that actual deaths might result from readers' failures 'to care for orphans and widows in their distress' (1.27) and to provide for 'a brother or sister [who] is naked and lacks daily food' (2.15–16) – at a time when 'the rich' were actively withholding 'the wages of the laborers ... by fraud' (5.4) and thus such actions were tantamount to murder[47] – the argument's structure requires that 'murder' follow 'adultery'. The author is therefore willing to concede for the sake of the argument that readers may not have been literally guilty of adultery against their spouses. Yet within the Letter's overall rhetoric sexual infidelity is a dominant motif for characterizing not only this failure to care for the needy but all failures to maintain a 'religion that is pure and undefiled before God' (Jas 1.27). Infidelity toward God demonstrated by being only 'hearers' rather than 'doers of the word' of divine wisdom (1.22–25) makes one a 'friend of the world' (4.4) rather than a 'friend of God' (2.23).

43 The author's apparent identification of this statement as a scriptural citation ('do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says ...') even though it appears nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures and the morphological ambiguity as to whether 'the spirit' (τὸ πνεῦμα) is the subject or object of the verb and thus either the divine Spirit or the human spirit given by God have made this one of the most difficult verses in the Letter to translate and interpret. I favor this translation from the NRSV, taking 'spirit' as the human spirit given by God, and take the statement as introducing the formal citation of Prov. 3.34 in Jas 4.6b. See Cargal, *Restoring the Diaspora,* pp. 160–62.

44 See also Schmitt, 'You Adulteresses!', pp. 334–35.

45 Laws, *James,* pp. 113–14.

46 In addition to Hartin's remarks that such was the case cited in n. 2 above, see also Dibelius, *James,* pp. 146–47; Davids, *James,* p. 117; Laws, *James,* pp. 115–16.

47 Cf. Sir. 34.22 [NRSV vv. 26–27], 'To take away a neighbor's living is to commit murder; to deprive an employee of wages is to shed blood'. Among those taking the position that deaths from such negligence provide the basis for the murder allegation are Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), p. 93; Davids, *James,* p. 179; Ropes, *St James,* p. 291. *Contra* Reicke's suggestion (*James, Peter, and Jude,* p. 29) that the author intends the charge of 'murder' to be construed 'in the broadened and deepened sense which Jesus gave it in the Sermon on the Mount' (Mt. 5.21–22), that is, as hatred (cf. Martin, *James,* p. 70).

So when, for the author of the Letter of James, is a prostitute not an adulteress? When she, like Rahab, has ceased to embody Woman Folly and instead embodies Woman Wisdom. When she not only has faith in God's goodness but acts on that faith in such a way that others lose their double-mindedness and doubt in God's goodness so that they might receive God's gifts for them. When she, like the author of the Letter of James, restores those who have wandered from the truth, covering a multitude of sins and saving her and their souls from death.

Father and Son: The Christology of Hebrews in Patrilineal Perspective

Pamela Eisenbaum

Introduction

While feminist studies in general and feminist biblical studies in particular have become increasingly variegated, feminist biblical scholars most often focus on how patriarchy has oppressed and still oppresses women or look for examples of how women have subverted patriarchy.[1] That the majority of feminist biblical scholars maintain this focus is understandable, given the extent of patriarchal oppression, the utilzation of the Bible in that oppression and its negative impact on women's lives. But this focus is not always useful, in terms of either advancing biblical scholarship or undermining patriarchal oppression. Hebrews is a case in point. Those who have consciously tried to utilize a feminist approach to Hebrews – to be sure, they are few – have not found that such analysis enabled new insights; nor has it yielded constructive biblical support for women.[2] The only promise Hebrews seemed to offer the feminist reader is its curious anonymity. Because Hebrews circulated anonymously for a long time before being ascribed to Paul, some scholars sought to explain Hebrews' anonymity by female authorship. Specifically, a few proposed Prisca (also known as Priscilla) as the author, or at least a possible author.[3] Ironically, this idea originated with Adolf Von Harnack.[4]

1 This focus has most often – though not always – had a constructive, liberationist agenda. I do not claim, however, that there is a coherent 'feminist agenda'. Different feminist biblical scholars start with different hermeneutical suppositions about the androcentrism of biblical texts. For example, for E. Schüssler Fiorenza, patriarchy is inherent in biblical texts; see *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); and 'Introduction', in *idem* (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures.* I. *An Introduction to Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Crossroad, 1994). By contrast, for T. Frymer-Kensky, the problem is much less with the text itself than with patriarchal readers; see *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of their Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), esp. pp. xxiii–xxvi. But both believe the Bible is androcentric in the sense that it is the product of men written largely for men, and both are committed to 'depatriarchalizing' the text, even if that process takes on different interpretive forms. According to Frymer-Kensky, 'depatriarchalizing' is a term first used by P. Trible in 'Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation', *JAAR* 41 (1973), pp. 30–48.

2 M.R. D'Angelo, 'Hebrews', in C.A. Newsom and S.H. Ringe (eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, expanded edn, 1998) pp. 455–59. Although D'Angelo concludes with a few constructive suggestions for feminist readers, her essay reveals the all-pervasive maleness of Hebrews.

3 R. Hoppin, *Priscilla, Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews and Other Essays* (New York: Exposition Press, 1969). C.B. Kittredge gives Hoppin's work more than a fair hearing, but ultimately decides the gender of the author remains unknowable; see 'Hebrews', in E. Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures.* II. *A Feminist Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), pp. 428–52.

4 A. Von Harnack, 'Probabilia über die Addresse und den Verfasser der Hebräerbriefs', *ZNW* 1

The interpretation of Hebrews offered here takes a different approach. I utilize gender as an analytical category in unraveling the text's christological logic. Such interpretation reaches beyond the obvious observation that the language of Hebrews is male-centered. Rather, I argue that Hebrews' unique blend of Jesus as Son of God, high priest and sacrificial offering is predicated on a patrilineal social structure deeply embedded in Mediterranean antiquity, one that not only privileges father–son relationships but also depends on blood sacrifice to maintain those privileged relationships. I seek to demonstrate that, without the assumptions of patriliny and its attendant notions of sacrifice, the author of Hebrews could not have imagined the christology he constructed, which became central to the formulation of christological doctrine, especially in the West.[5]

The history of scholarship on Hebrews repeatedly points out that the various christological threads woven together are strange if not contradictory. Harold Attridge refers to these competing christological threads as 'antinomies'.[6] Not only does the emphasis on Jesus' high priesthood distinguish Hebrews from other early Christian texts, its relationship to the sonship of Jesus strikes many interpreters as needing explanation. Nowhere is the tension between Jesus' sonship and priesthood more evident than in the juxtaposition of two citations from the LXX in Heb. 5.5–6: 'So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming high priest, rather the one who speaks to him [glorifies him]: "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten you"; as, in another place also, he says, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek".'[7] As Attridge says, 'The citation of the two scriptural texts, Ps. 2.7 and 110.4, raises the problem of the relationship between Christ's sonship and his priesthood'.[8] Most

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(1900), pp. 16–41. The ascription of the authorship of Hebrews to Prisca has been rejected by virtually all scholars of Hebrews. None of the various male authors for Hebrews (e.g. Barnabas, Apollos, Clement of Rome) has gained mainstream acceptance either. Since the author remains anonymous, so the person's gender must remain unknown. Partly for the sake of convenience, and partly for the sake of emphasizing the abundant maleness of the language of Hebrews, I use the male pronoun 'he' when referring to the author.

5 See the excellent summary of the role Hebrews has played in the history of christological debate in C. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), pp. 19–40.

6 H. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), pp. 25–27. See also *idem*, 'The Use of Antithesis in Hebrews 8–10', in G.W.E. Nickelsburg and G.W. MacRae (eds.), *Christians Among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl on his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), pp. 1–9.

7 All translations of Hebrews are mine; translations of other biblical texts are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted. In my translations I have tried to use language similar to the NRSV wherever I consider it adequate but have adapted it where I believe I can construct a better rendering of the Greek. In addition, I intentionally use male-specific language (e.g. 'fathers', where the NRSV has 'ancestors' in 1.2) to expose the gendered nature of the language. As a general philosophy of translation, I have no argument with the NRSV's inclusive-language policy. But in the case of Hebrews, it often obscures the meaning of the text, precisely because Hebrews' christology requires a gendered understanding of Jesus. For example, the inclusive translation of ἄνθρωπος as 'human beings' and υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου as 'mortals' in Heb. 2.6–7, a quotation of Ps. 8.4–6, confounds the reader when the author begins to interpret the psalm text christologically in 2.8–9.

8 Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 146.

commentators assume that Hebrews' sonship language, especially when reinforced with quotations from royal psalms (like Psalm 2), derives from traditions that emphasize Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. But the citation of Ps. 110.4, which equates Jesus with the priestly order of Melchizedek, seemingly undermines the sonship language, because, as the author says elsewhere of Melchizedek, 'Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually' (7.3). Most scholars resolve 'the problem of the relationship between Christ's sonship and his priesthood' by saying that Hebrews creatively integrates disparate traditions about the figure of Jesus floating around in either the early Jewish or the early Christian universe, or both.[9]

In addition to the emphasis on Jesus as Son and high priest, Hebrews' other major christological component is Jesus as a sacrifice. While the understanding of Jesus' death as sacrificial appears in other early Christian texts, only Hebrews constructs an argument for why Jesus' sacrifice was necessary, an argument developed through dependence on the cultic mandates of the levitical sacrificial system. That Jesus is a high priest of the order of Melchizedek (chs. 5–7) *and* is the perfect priest (and sacrifice) according to levitical standards (chs. 9–10) does warrant explanation, especially since Hebrews at a few points goes out of its way to stress the *dissimilarity* between Jesus and levitical priests, including insisting that Jesus is descended from the tribe of Judah 'about which tribe Moses said nothing concerning priests' (7.14; cf. 8.4). Again, some scholars dissolve the problem by assuming the author is simply incorporating earlier traditions. However, one scholar who comprehensively surveyed the various traditions purportedly informing Hebrews concludes, 'A main feature of the epistle ... which might be said to remain unanswered by these various factors is Christ's depiction as heavenly high priest. How *Auctor* proceeded from Christ as the "priest like Melchizedek" of Ps. 110.4 to a *high* priest who operates within a Levitical-type framework remains a riddle.'[10]

Since so little is known about the text's origins and provenance, there is little way to gauge what traditions the author knew. Moreover, whatever scholars believe the author may have known or not known does not explain why he combined them as he did. What enabled the author to construct this complex christology with its tripartite structure of Son, high priest and sacrifice? Since I believe that understanding Hebrews' christology depends on understanding the relationship between patriliny and sacrifice, I will first attend to the theoretical and socio-cultural constructs that inform my reading.

9 See, for example, S. Kistemaker, *The Psalms Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Soest, 1961), pp. 116–17; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 191–95. Three excursuses in Attridge's commentary review the extensive array of source traditions named to account for the composite character of Hebrews' christology; see *Hebrews*, pp. 54–55; 97–101; 146–47. In commenting on Heb. 1.5, Attridge says, 'It is certainly clear that the author has used earlier materials that ultimately derive from different conceptual schemes and that can be integrated into a coherent theoretical framework only with difficulty' (p. 55).

10 L.D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS, 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 133.

Gender, Genealogy and Sacrifice

In her book, *Throughout Your Generations Forever*,[11] feminist sociologist Nancy Jay begins with the claim that social constructs are required for the establishment of paternity in a way they are not for maternity because of the blunt reality of childbirth. Jay then argues that these social constructs almost always take the form of sacrifice, which in turn allows paternal bloodlines to dominate. Her central thesis is that sacrifice is 'a remedy for having been born of woman'.[12]

Jay reveals gender's key role in the logic of many, if not most, sacrificial systems. One way to observe the role of gender in sacrificial rites is to note the symbolic opposition between sacrifice and childbirth, and thus women, in numerous and diverse religious traditions. Apropos of the study of early Christianity, this opposition occurs in Israelite/Jewish, Greek and Roman traditions, all of which require some sort of sacrifice to remove the pollution generated by childbirth or to demarcate the period of pollution from neutral time.[13] In Israelite tradition, the foundational text is Lev. 12.1–8, which describes the period of a woman's ritual impurity as a result of giving birth and prescribes the required sacrifices necessary to alleviate it.[14] Evidence closer to the time of Hebrews indicates that sacrificial

11 N. Jay, *Throughout your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

12 Jay, *Generations*, p. xxiii. In making use of Jay's work, I want to distance myself from her most far-reaching claims. Her book attempts to offer a general theory of sacrifice and to argue that blood sacrifice is inherently tainted by the motivation for male domination and control. Problems with these components of her analysis are insightfully discussed in the context of other attempts to offer general theories of sacrifice, by I. Strenski, 'Between Theory and Speciality: Sacrifice in the 90s', *RSR* 22 (1996), pp. 10–20. The critique leveled against Jay, however, happens to be the strength of her work for my particular project. Strenski, who generally assesses her work positively and with enthusiasm, points out that Jay's theory is grounded in a notion of sacrifice that prevails in the Western tradition, specifically among Israelites, Greeks, Romans, Christians and Jews, and which, therefore, may not translate into other cultures. Since I am concerned here not with constructing a general theory of sacrifice, but rather with illuminating the logic of sacrifice present in the cultural context relevant to Hebrews, this flaw with Jay's work need not interfere with my analysis. Second, I agree with S. Stowers, who rightly critiques Jay for underestimating the social construction involved in maternity as well as paternity; 'Greeks Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion', in L.M. White and O.L. Yarbrough (eds.), *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne Meeks* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 293–333. Stowers, however, agrees with Jay's fundamental assertion that sacrifice functions to create a hierarchical opposition between maternity and paternity so as to insure the dominance of the paternal line.

13 Mary Douglas, who no doubt influenced Jay, must also be credited; see *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966). Douglas has developed more nuanced ways of understanding the social function of purity in more recent, detailed discussions of Israelite religion; see especially 'Atonement in Leviticus', *JSQ* 1 (1993/94), pp. 109–30; and 'Sacred Contagion', in J.F. Sawyer (ed.), *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 86–106.

14 Lev. 12.2, 5 compares the mother's state of impurity to 'the time of her menstruation'. This comparison is not an explanation of the reason for the impurity. Rather, the analogy reveals that the same kinds of rules of impurity apply after childbirth as after menstruation (that the impurity extends to whomever she touches, whatever she sits on, etc.; see Lev. 15.19–24). The *specific reason* childbirth causes impurity is not specified, as is typical of biblical purity laws and why scholars have invested so much energy in trying to explain them; see, most recently, J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*

rituals enacted after childbirth still obtained or were at least ideally still prescribed.[15]

In ancient Greece, where there was scarcely ever a gathering of elite males without a sacrifice to legitimize it, sacrifices were enacted on both large and small scales to remove the pollution created by childbirth. It seems that such pollution was often considered as severe as that created by death, for literary and epigraphic evidence indicate that death and childbirth represent society's most polluting forces.[16] A first-century CE Attic inscription, which calls for a large-scale cleansing and restoration of temples and all sacred precincts, demonstrates a profound concern that temples be free of the pollution created by death and childbirth.[17]

Furthermore, as far as historical evidence allows, only men can remove the impurity of childbirth. It seems that women in Israelite, Greek and Roman tradition were not permitted to perform any kind of animal sacrifices.[18] Despite widespread assumptions that women's impurity is concluded by ritual bathing, levitical laws make no mention of ablutions for women (though ablutions are prescribed for men); it is, rather, sacrifice that removes impurity. Israelite law requires a male priest (as opposed to the father, for example) to perform the sacrificial rite. Although the new mother brings the offerings to the priest 'at the entrance to the tent of meeting' (Lev. 12.6), only the priest can make the sacrifices and remove the pollution (Lev. 12.7).[19] In the Greek rite known as the *Amphidromia*, the newborn is paraded around the hearth to begin the process of removing the pollution created by the birth. Although it is unclear whether the father declared the child's legitimacy then or whether a separate rite was performed a few days later, it is clear that the father makes a

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in Ancient Israel (New York: Oxford, 2000), pp. 3–42. That the purity laws governing childbirth occur in a separate section of Leviticus from the laws governing menstruation, and that there are different lengths of the time of impurity for boys and girls (as well as different descriptions of the impurity in the case of a girl) indicate that childbearing is its own unique species of impurity-causing event and can help reveal attitudes toward childbearing women. Even J. Milgrom, who makes much of the similarities between the impurities of menstruation and childbirth, concedes there may well be a qualitative difference; see *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 746.

15 See Lk. 2.22–24; 11QTemple 48.16.

16 See the discussion by R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 32–73, 352–53.

17 A reconstruction of the inscription and discussion of the date appear in G.R. Culley, 'The Restoration of Sanctuaries in Attica: *IG*, II^2.1035', *Hesperia* 44 (1975), pp. 207–23. The inscription is mentioned briefly by Parker, who cites line 10 as one of many cases where the pollution of death and childbirth seem to be equated; see *Miasma*, p. 33.

18 M. Beard, J. North and S. Price reiterate the majority scholarly view that Roman women were probably banned from performing animal sacrifices, 'and so prohibited from any officiating role in *the* central defining ritual of civic religious activity', even if they were involved in certain other cultic rites, *Religions of Rome*. I. *A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 297.

19 Cf. the discussion by J. Romney Wegner, 'Leviticus', in C.A. Newsom and S.H. Ringe (eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, expanded edn, 1998), pp. 46–47. She points out that when men have seminal discharges, they still need a priest to make sacrifices to remove the pollution created by the discharge, but such men are instructed to 'come before the LORD to the entrance of the tent of meeting' (Lev. 15.14), whereas women come to the tent of meeting, but not 'before the LORD' (Lev. 12.6; 15.29). The Temple Scroll (cols. 39–40) and Josephus confirm that women must be kept at greater distance from the temple's altar than men.

sacrifice to purify the hearth polluted by childbirth, and that, if the father declares the child legitimate, that child is consecrated to the patriline.[20] In Roman society, the *paterfamilias* bore responsibility for maintaining the household rites including the worship of the ancestral deities, the *lares* and *penates*.[21]

According to Jay, sacrifice generally enables the stripping away of the limits of biology and mortality (associated with women) so that one can enjoy membership in an eternal social order.[22] Consider Ovid's description of Heracles's transformation from mortal to immortal being:

> All that his mother gave him burned away.
> Only the image of his father's likeness
> Rose from the ashes of his funeral pyre...
> So Heracles stepped free of mortal being...
> And with an air of gravity and power
> Grew tall, magnificent as any god.[23]

To be sure, Heracles's father was divine and his mother mortal, but Ovid's language nevertheless functions paradigmatically. Immortality is associated with the patriline; mortality is the mother's contribution. It is not accidental that this particular metamorphosis comes at the moment when Heracles was sacrificing bulls to Zeus.

Patrilineal descent is a genealogical construct in which members of the group trace their ancestry to a single male ancestor, designed to provide society with a coherent social identity.[24] Abraham functions as this kind of patriarchal ancestor in Judaism.[25] Heracles and other figures from Greek mythology perform the same function in Greek and Roman kin groups.[26] Preoccupation with a particular patriline appears most frequently in societies in which families are part of more extended and complex kin groups (e.g. clans, tribes) and where the transfer of property (i.e., concerns over inheritance) needs conscious attention.[27] As Stowers says, 'Sacrificial systems are ways of regulating kinship, descent, and the inheritance of property ...'[28] Determination of inheritance rites and familial status was made not by proving one's

20 See Isaeus, *De Pyrrhi Hered.* 30; and Plato, *Theaet.* 160e. For more discussion of the evidence of this rite, see R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Life from Conception to Old Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); and Parker, *Miasma,* pp. 51–52. A denial of membership meant exposure of the infant; see S. Pomeroy, 'Infanticide in Hellenistic Greece', in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Classical Antiquity* (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1983), pp. 207–22.

21 See Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, I, p. 49.

22 Jay, *Generations*, p. 39.

23 *The Metamorphoses* (trans. Horace Gregory; New York: Viking, 1958), p. 248, quoted in Jay, *Generations*, p. 31.

24 See the classic essay by M. Fortes, 'The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups', *American Anthropologist* 55 (1953), pp. 17–41. Unilineal descent does not necessarily imply patrilineal descent, but in the case of Greeks, Romans, and Israelites, it does.

25 See the comments of Jeffrey Siker in *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), p. 135.

26 See the discussion by C.P. Jones in *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 6–26. Jones explains that Heracles was easily made into an ancestor linking peoples together because of his widespread travels.

27 Jay, *Generations*, p. 34.

28 Stowers, 'Greeks Who Sacrifice', p. 313.

birth from certain parents but by proving one participated in the requisite sacrificial rites.[29] The Roman *pontifices*, one of the most significant of the religious colleges of priests, and one in which legal and religious duties were completely intertwined, had oversight of family adoptions, wills, and inheritance.[30]

Kinship was structured around the *familia* in the late Republican and early Imperial Rome. While the *familia* included all members of the household headed by a *paterfamilias*, including non-biological members, *familia* also refers to property, possessions and power extending beyond the immediate household. The *paterfamilias* held a legal right known as *patria potestas*, meaning the right to decide the fate of all members of the *familia*, and, technically, he owned all property, including assets acquired by anyone under his authority. Hence, daughters and sons could not make any property transactions without the permission of the *paterfamilias*. However, as this arrangement may have presented practical challenges, a *paterfamilias* could offer a *filius*, a legally recognized son, a *peculium*, which allowed the son to make business transactions and exercise control over a portion of the *familia* independently.[31] In distinction to what we know from biblical tradition, Roman daughters remained under the *patria potestas* of their fathers even after they married. Although legal marriage was required for a man to hold the status of a *paterfamilias*, 'the Romans did not view themselves as a society of mothers, daughters, and brothers but rather as a society of fathers and sons'.[32]

A similar observation has been made about family relations gleaned from NT writings: 'A cursory study shows that in relations between the generations, "father" and "sons" dominate the picture whereas "mothers" and "daughters" are very rare. In relations between members of the same generation, those between "brothers" outweigh all others. It may be that some of these terms express "inclusive language", but still the gender imbalance is considerable.'[33] Even within Roman public discourse, brotherhood – while sometimes idealized as equilateral fraternalism – is most often characterized as an unequal relationship between a superior (usually older) son and an inferior one. In other words, prescriptions for fraternal loyalty and well-being emulate the ideals of filial piety.[34] In part because of the traditional Roman understanding of kinship in terms of hierarchy, power and property, the language and symbolism of family relations could be easily deployed on a large political scale. By the first century BCE, Julius Ceasar was called *Pater Patriae*, 'Father of the Fatherland', and the worship of the *lares* and *penates* began migrating into the public sphere. Migration of family cultic practice into civic life increased

29 See the discussion by Stowers, 'Greeks Who Sacrifice', pp. 318–19.

30 See, e.g., Cicero, *On the Laws* 2.47–53; and the discussion by Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, I, pp. 24–25, 99–108.

31 E.M. Lassen, 'The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor', in H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 103–20 (106–107).

32 Lassen, 'The Roman Family', p. 111.

33 H. Moxnes, 'What Is Family?: Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families', in *idem* (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 13–41 (31).

34 This is evident throughout Plutarch's treatise *De fraterno amore* (*On Brotherly Love*). I am grateful to P. Gray, who first brought to my attention the connection between fraternal and filial ideals in Greco-Roman sources; see 'Brotherly Love and the High Priest Christology of Hebrews', *JBL* 122.2 (2003), pp. 335–51.

dramatically under Augustus, who also assumed the title *Pater Patriae* and seemingly attempted a fusion of his *genius* and ancestral *lares* with the public Vesta cult.[35] Thus, at the time of Christian origins, patrilinealism pervaded political, economic, domestic and public religious life, at least for Roman elite society.

A patriline maintains intergenerational continuity between fathers and sons, and that means that women and childbearing, because they are associated with the 'fleshly' construction of kinship, are necessarily devalued.[36] As a matter of social practice, women participate in the family, but they cannot participate in the genealogical symbol system. 'Women marry outside their own family and bear children for the continuity of a different family. Children are born not just of women, but of outsiders. For any boy, "all that his mother gave him" pollutes the purity of the paternal line.'[37] Because the women who provide the heirs for one family originate in a different family, their lineage cannot be recognized without threatening the patriline's boundaries and coherence. Patrilineal lines of descent cannot rely on birth; some other reliable marker for maintaining the genealogical integrity of fathers and sons is required. Sacrifice is that marker.

Sacrifice also makes possible the establishment of social relations or lines of succession in groups where typical family relations play no role (such as the Catholic priesthood, where the celebrants of the Mass comprise a lineage of males going back to Jesus). Furthermore, participation in a lineage based on sacrifice enables participants to be part of a 'ritually defined social order, enduring continuously through time, that birth and death (continually changing the membership of the "eternal" lineage) and all other threats of social chaos may be overcome'.[38]

Sonship, Sanctification and Sacrifice

Throughout your Generations Forever begins with a discussion of Heb. 9.22: 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin'. For Jay, it is an example of how sacrificial ritual possesses its own internal logic, but this logic is not transparent. 'How do we know whether the shedding of blood is or is not an indispensable means for remission of sin?'[39] My goal is not to theorize about sacrificial ritual in general, but rather to unravel the logic of Hebrews in particular. This unraveling is enabled by Jay's theoretical work as well as others' analyses of Hebrews' cultural context, for ritual is always situational.[40]

Although there is no consensus about the immediate circumstances under which Hebrews was produced, it is most likely a late first-century text associated with Rome.[41]

35 Lassen, 'The Roman Family', pp. 112–13.

36 See the comments of Carol Delaney, *Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1998), pp. 156–58.

37 Jay, *Generations*, p. 31.

38 Jay, *Generations*, p. 39.

39 Jay, *Generations*, p. 1. The translation for Heb. 9.22 comes from the RSV.

40 C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 81–88.

41 See Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 48–50, for the reasons favoring Hebrews' association with Rome. Koester claims that a large number of scholars now favor a Roman destination and that it seems to be the most plausible context among those posited (e.g. Alexandria, Jerusalem). He also provides a list of twentieth-century commentators who argue for a Roman destination (p. 49 n. 106).

I believe, however, that the general thrust of my argument would hold even for those who date the composition earlier – many scholars believe Hebrews was written before the Jewish War[42] – and who believe its origins lie elsewhere. The Roman Imperial context pervaded many cities and provinces in the middle as well as the late first century, and there existed similar emphasis on patrilineal kinship in Greek, Roman and Jewish tradition, so that it is reasonable to assume they comprised part of the cultural context of Hebrews broadly defined. In what follows, I structure my analysis around the three primary components of Hebrews' christology I named earlier: Son, priest and sacrifice.

Son:

A comparative survey quickly reveals that Hebrews places much greater emphasis on Jesus' divine sonship than other NT writings, save perhaps the Johannine literature.[43] While some references to Jesus as 'Son' or 'Son of God' appear in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is more often called 'Son of Man' or 'Son of David' than 'Son of God'. Paul sometimes calls Jesus 'Son of God' but employs other titles far more often, including Christ, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, and Lord. The importance of Jesus' divine sonship in Hebrews is demonstrated by the opening two verses: 'In many and various ways in times past, God spoke to the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world'. With the exception of Romans, Paul never utilizes 'Son' in opening addresses of his letters. Even though Pauline epistolary greetings consistently call God 'Father' ('Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'), the title 'Father' does not evoke its most obvious complement, 'Son', but rather 'Lord Jesus Christ'. By contrast, Hebrews fundamentally depends on Father–Son complementarity to describe the relationship between

42 The view that Hebrews was written before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 CE) appears to be dominant among English-speaking scholars, while the view that Hebrews is written late in the first century finds favor among German-speaking scholars. Both Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 6–9, and Koester, *Hebrews*, pp. 50–54, consider the question unsolvable, but provide a fair assessment of both positions. My reasons for favoring a late date are briefly summarized in Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context* (SBLDS, 156; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), p. 7. For a more complete argument in support of a late dating, see E. Grässer, *An die Hebräer* (EKKNT, 17; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), pp. 22–27.

43 Utilizing a computer search of the 27th edition of Nestle–Aland (*Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), I count twelve times the title Son appears in Hebrews. This count includes appearances of the title in psalms cited, which obviously bear christological meaning for the author. They are as follows: 1.2, 5a, 5b, 8; 3.6; 4.14; 5.5, 8; 6.6; 7.3, 28; 10.29. With the exception of Romans, the number of times Paul uses the title 'Son' constitutes a tiny fraction of his christological language (in the undisputed epistles: three times in all the Corinthian correspondence, four times in Galatians, once in 1 Thessalonians; in the disputed epistles: once in Ephesians, once in Colossians). Romans uses the title 'Son' to refer to Christ seven times, three in the first chapter, vv. 3, 4, 9, one in 5.10, and three in Rom. 8, vv. 3, 29, 32 where discussion is focused on the topic of sonship and the divine inheritance of believers. Thus, the use of 'Son' for Jesus is directly related to the topic at hand (the same is true of Gal. 4, where the title appears twice), because Jesus is the 'firstborn among many brothers' (Rom. 8.29). As I demonstrate below, the sonship of Jesus is closely tied to the sonship of believers in Hebrews as well.

God and Jesus. As one scholar says poignantly, the beginning of Hebrews is almost like 'listening in' on a private dialogue between the Father God and his Son.[44] Perhaps this dialogue emphasizes the Son's mediating role. As with human patriliny, in which all family relations are mediated through the primary relation of father and son, so also with divine Father and Son. Because the author's theology is rooted in Judaic monotheism, he already possesses one key concept for a patrilineal christology: a male God who has no female counterpart; a non-procreative creator God.[45] Such a theology combines nicely with patrilineal assumptions: it permits discourse about the divine Father–Son relationship without any reference to a mother (divine or human). Moreover, such discourse is 'naturalized'. In other words, the author does not need to explain the lack of a mother in the production of a son because patrilineal genealogies are predicated on the exclusion of the female.

That patrilineal assumptions help organize Hebrews' christology is evident in the explicit connection made between sonship and inheritance. Immediately following the introduction of the Son, the author calls him the one 'who has been appointed heir of all things'. Indeed, as Craig Koester points out, the imagery of Heb. 1.1–4 evokes the concept of inheritance broadly. The Son takes control of the created order, which grants him the same power and authority of the Father. He has become the 'impress' of the Father's essence,[46] and, 'after making purification from sins', he assumes a position of exaltation. Commentators tend to spend substantial interpretive energy sorting out the sequence of Jesus' various roles, because otherwise Hebrews' christology is chronologically incoherent. For example, how does pre-existence (implied by 'through whom he created the world') fit with the tradition of God designating Jesus as the Son, meaning that Jesus *becomes* the Son at a particular point in time or as a consequence of a particular event?[47]

44 M. Barth, 'Old Testament in Hebrews: An Essay in Biblical Hermeneutics', in W. Klassen and G.F. Snyder (eds.), *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), pp. 53–78 (62). Indeed, Heb. 1.5–13 comprises a catena of quotations in which God speaks to the Son – and not to 'us through a Son' as the opening verses state. The author rarely uses the title 'Father' for God; it appears in the psalms quotations at the beginning of Hebrews and in 12.9. However, since the author almost always portrays God as the speaker, addressing himself to the Son, there can be no doubt that God's relationship to Jesus and, by extension, Jesus' followers, is as Father.

45 The 'problem' of God's gender and its relationship to the conceptualization of masculinity is thoroughly developed by H. Eilberg-Schwartz in *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994). Eilberg-Schwartz captures the irony of the non-procreative creator God with the phrase 'the sexlessness of the father God' (p. 4). Part of his argument is that the concept of a father God was in fundamental tension with a patrilineal society. My claim here for the compatibility between patrilinealism and male monotheism is not incompatible with his thesis because Eilberg-Schwartz's point in articulating this tension is to demonstrate the various strategies employed to resolve it. He argues that one such strategy was by means of the ban on images of the divine. The prohibition of images was not the result of a desire to avoid anthropomorphism, but 'male-morphism' (p. 9) 'God is a masculine deity whose maleness is repressed and avoided. People do think of God as a he *without* a male body' (p. 25). Because patriliny was both symbolized and practiced during the Greco-Roman period as kinship without biology, without fleshly constraint, and because Hellenistic Judaism had only intensified the concept of a masculine deity without a male body, the author of Hebrews had the ideal means for formulating a father–son christology without raising the issue of reproduction.

46 Χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ.

47 Cf., for example, Rom. 1.3-4, or the various scenes of Jesus' baptism and transfiguration in the Gospels in which God designates Jesus Son through the invocation of Ps. 2.7 and Isa. 42.1.

As Attridge says, the catena of Heb. 1.5–13 implies that Jesus' status as Son is tied to the exaltation.[48] Moreover, Koester points to another apparent contradiction: how can Jesus be described as an heir – more specifically, one who already bears his inheritance – if the Son's father has not died?[49]

The way commentators typically address such christological antinomy reveals at least one fundamental presupposition: that father–son language implies some sort of temporal progression and therefore requires diachronic analysis. That scholars feel compelled to offer a diachronic explanation is not surprising. The language of genealogy points to the transition from one generation to the next, which connotes temporal movement. Moreover, as noted above, to be considered a 'son' in elite Greek, Roman and Jewish society meant that one had to be ritually designated as such by the father. A boy born to a legitimate marriage was not automatically a fully enfranchised member of the patriline. Only through ritual process – often more than one – can a man enjoy the privileges of membership in the patriline, most importantly, his inheritance. At the same time, a genealogy constitutes a symbolic expression of an individual's identity. As a symbol, its primary function is not diachronic but synchronic. Even the biblical expression 'from generation to generation' represents not temporality but eternality. To evoke Jay again: A patriline is understood as a perfectly unified, eternal lineage that sustains one's social identity and overcomes all forms of social chaos, including uncontrollable variables of birth and death, that threaten the identity of an individual 'son' and the coherence of the patriline upon which his identity depends.

Thus, what may seem a contradiction regarding Hebrews' conception of Jesus' sonship disappears if the reader understands that Jesus, once ritually ordained as the Son – from the author's perspective, Jesus has already been through the ritual process that made him the Son – embodies the entire patriline, backwards and forwards, for all eternity. That the author of Hebrews shares this perspective is evident from his discussion of Abraham, Levi and Melchizedek in 7.4–10, where Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek essentially means that Levi paid the tithe, since he was 'in the loins of his father' (v. 10),[50] that is, Abraham, who is given the title 'the patriarch'[51] (v. 4).

Although the father–son relationship evokes for modern readers an intergenerational and therefore temporal relationship, for ancient readers it was mostly seen as expressing an essential, eternal structuring of the social order. To be sure, Hebrews 1 seems to connect Jesus' status as the Son with his exaltation and so imply that his filial status applies to a particular moment in time. But as others rightly point out, Hebrews also uses the title Son in connection with the suffering Jesus endured in human form.[52]

48 Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 25.

49 'A person could be designated as an heir while the testator was still alive but would ordinarily not take possession of the estate until the testator died (cf. 9.16–17). A ruler would designate the son as his heir so that when the ruler died his son would govern the kingdom. The peculiarity here is that God – the testator – does not die; instead the Son enters into his inheritance and kingly power through his own death and exaltation'; see Koester, *Hebrews*, pp. 177–78.

50 ἔτι γὰρ ἐν τῇ ὀσφύι τοῦ πατρός. See BDAG, p. 730, for examples of other texts that use the same or similar expressions to speak of lineage.

51 Πατριάρχης.

52 This is most obvious in Heb. 5.8: 'Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered'.

Again, since Jesus has become the Son, the purpose of using the title in different contexts is not to connect it with a particular moment. Rather, its appearance in different context reinforces the patrilineal symbolism permeating the text's christology. The connection between Jesus' sonship and his human suffering, for example, permits the addressees to understand themselves as potential members of the divine patriline. Jesus is said to be the 'first-born', the 'pioneer' (2.10), the 'source of eternal salvation to all who obey him' (5.9) and the one who will bring 'many sons into glory' (2.10). In 2.11, 12 and 17 Jesus and his followers are called 'brothers'. The analogy between Jesus as Son and believers as sons can also be seen in the way suffering is connected to sonship for both. The author stresses the addressees' status as sons when he attempts to explain why they must endure suffering; it is the result of the Father's discipline. Only sons are given the privilege of discipline, not illegitimate children (12.3–11). For most early believers in Jesus, immortality – the possession of heavenly rest, to use Hebrews' terminology – constitutes the sought-after inheritance to which they were entitled as sons. Put another way, transcendence of death could be achieved not merely through participation in Christ's patriline; rather, membership in this patriline is itself a form of immortality. Nevertheless, Jesus' fraternal kinship with humans does not diminish the hierarchical relationship between him and his siblings. Apart from Jesus' role as the esteemed first-born Son endowed with the authority to function as a mediator between the Father and his other 'kin', there exists no other means for the addressees of Hebrews to receive their inheritance.[53]

High Priest:

The title that interpreters of Hebrews generally recognize as most significant is 'priest' or 'high priest'.[54] Like use of the title 'Son' for Jesus, Hebrews' various descriptions of Jesus as high priest seemingly strain logical coherence. Parts of the author's argument model Jesus' priesthood on Melchizedek, in contrast to the levitical priesthood, and emphasize the eternality and divinity of his priestly status.[55] Many scholars therefore assume that Jesus' status as high priest is achieved at the moment of his exaltation.[56] Other parts model Jesus' priesthood on the levitical paradigm and necessarily connect Jesus' priestly functions to his earthly life. What differentiates Jesus' priestly status in these passages is not that he is a different kind of priest, but that he is the perfect priest by the levitical standard of measure, an implied ideal not attainable by ordinary human priests.[57]

These two models of priesthood are not in tension. Rather, both reflect different aspects of a patrilineal social structure which inform the author's conception of

53 See the discussion of Gray, 'Brotherly Love and the High Priest Christology.

54 The author uses the terms 'priest' and 'high priest' interchangeably of Jesus, as Attridge, *Hebrews*, points out (p. 146 n. 116).

55 See 5.6–10; 6.20; 7.3, 11–28; 8.1–7; 9.24.

56 Other scholars define that 'moment' differently, such as his sacrificial death, or his death-plus-exaltation; Spicq argues for the incarnation; see C. Spicq, *L'Epitre aux Hébreux* (2 vols.; Paris: Gabalda, 1952–53), II, p. 111. For a review of various scholarly positions, see F. Laub, *Bekenntnis und Auslegung: Die paränetische Funktion der Christologie im Hebräerbrief* (BU, 15; Regensburg: Putstet, 1980), pp. 112–25; Peterson, *Perfection*, pp. 191–95; and Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 146–47.

57 See 2.17; 4.14–16; 5.1–5; 9.11–14; 10.1–22; 13.10–12.

Jesus. The problem of the relationship between Christ's sonship and his priesthood is ameliorated by revealing the patrilineal underpinnings of both roles.

Whether one focuses on the model of Melchizedek or the levitical priesthood, that Jesus is called a priest at all is significant, not only because this designation is unique among NT documents, but also because such status is associated with specifically male rights of privilege and kinship. For ancient Greeks, Romans and Israelites/Jews, a priest is a man privileged to perform sacred rites, usually blood sacrifices. Although the sacrificial rites observed by priests are tremendously varied in the ancient Mediterranean world, the title 'priest', like the title 'Son' or 'Son of God', would not have seemed peculiar. On the contrary, the term lends itself well to cross-cultural conversation and social intercourse among male elites. Also analogous to the title 'Son', 'priest' during the early Roman Imperial period (though it began earlier) had become enmeshed with political roles both in Roman civic life and for the Jerusalem temple establishment.

In Rome, the overlap of religious offices with the regulation of civic life rises to prominence with Imperial rule. Whereas once the chief priest of the college of *pontifices*, the *pontifex maximus* (ἀρχιερεύς; 'high priest'), was appointed by a special election, beginning with Augustus and throughout most of the Imperial period, the title was held by the emperor and could only be held by him.[58] Whereas previously attainment of priestly status was restricted to membership in a single college, Augustus, as *pontifex maximus*, made himself a member of all four priestly colleges. Thus, the Roman 'high priest' became the highest religious authority just as he was the highest political authority; just as the latter was maintained through Caesar's genealogical line, so was the former. The one thing that had always distinguished priestly from public office in Roman society was that a priest was appointed for life whereas consuls, prefects and others had restricted terms, usually one year.[59] To be sure, many of the duties of Roman priests had always included or affected the lives of Roman citizens and those they colonized. The *pontifices* of the Republic, just as in the Empire, regulated family law, including adoptions, wills and the distribution of inheritance.

In Jerusalem, the office of high priest became politically charged in the wake of the Maccabean revolt. Having taken on the mantle of his elder brother Judas Maccabeus, Jonathan was the first non-Zadokite high priest and was moreover 'appointed' to the office by a Syrian king, Alexander Balas. King Alexander also named Jonathan 'commander' and 'co-governor' of Judea.[60] Jonathan's brother Simon was subsequently appointed to the high priesthood, only this time by a 'great assembly of the priests and the people and the rulers of the nation and the elders of

58 As explained in Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, I, Julius Caesar held the title, and during his dictatorship it was decreed that the honor would be automatically bestowed on Caesar's heir. Such a decree effectively undid the process of election by which the office of *pontifex maximus* had been obtained and thus transformed it into an inherited right (pp. 191–92).

59 As Pliny the Younger says in a letter to a friend newly appointed to the college of *augures*, 'the priesthood is an ancient and religious office, which has an especial sanctity in that it is held for life' (*Letters*, 4.8; cited in Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, I, p. 192).

60 See 1 Macc. 10.20, 65. Alexander Balas and Demetrius, son of Seleucus IV, were rival claimants to the throne in Syria, a situation Jonathan seems to have successfully exploited, at least for a time.

the country' (1 Macc. 14.28). This great assembly gave Jonathan the title mainly because of his and his family's military and political accomplishments (1 Macc. 14.25–49). It seems that the office of high priest under the Hasmoneans functioned as the highest consolidated political and religious authority – if not always in reality, at least symbolically – until the rise of Herod.

Herod, appointed 'King of the Jews' by the Romans, was not appointed high priest. He was not of priestly descent; an Idumean, he was not even of Judean descent. Herod did, however, obtain the right to appoint the high priest, over which he exercised tight control precisely because he recognized the political power attached to the office.[61] Thus, although the office of high priest became distinct from political authority during the first century, the close link between political and religious power still obtained for the Jews much as it did for the Romans.[62]

Whereas the process of anointing priests varied among and between Romans and Jews, the need for an official, politically sanctioned process of appointment for anyone assuming a priestly office intensified in the first century, mainly because of the increasing overlap (and confusion) between religious and political offices. The Emperor as *pontifex maximus* essentially dominated Rome's major priestly colleges. The rise of the Hasmoneans, followed by Herod and his incomparable embellishment of the Temple and Jerusalem (further followed by the dissolution of any local sovereign after the demise of Herod's successors), meant that the Jerusalem Temple establishment was the only locus of Jewish religious, political and economic power.[63] Jewish priests, like their Roman counterparts, bore responsibility for keeping genealogical records, utilized to determine familial entitlements concerning inheritance and control of property.[64]

That priestly status became more dependent on or intertwined with political authority should not be seen as necessarily leading to the devaluation of genealogy's role in conferring priestly status.[65] That priestly status was maintained through patrilineal descent obtained throughout the first century CE.[66] If one was a male member

61 Herod's marriage to Mariamme (however disastrous) through which he tried to ally himself with the Hasmonean family indicates his awareness of the political power wielded by priestly families. See P. Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1996), pp. 240–47.

62 See S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 40–48.

63 M. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). See also Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, pp. 59–99.

64 S.J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 50. Priests seem to have continued keeping genealogical records even after the destruction of the temple; see Josephus, *Apion* 1.32.

64 It appears that Herod, precisely because he recognized the political threat, changed the terms of the high priesthood by appointing various individuals for irregular terms. After Herod's death the high priesthood reverted to being dynastic 'since Herod's descendents and Roman successors preferred to appoint to the post descendents of Herod's high priests'; Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, p. 45. The Herodian method of appointing high priests was, therefore, relatively anomalous.

66 There is no evidence of the rabbinic concept of the 'matrilineal principle' during the Second Temple period. It first appears in the Mishnah; the foundational text is *M. Qid.* 3.12: 'Wherever there is potential for a valid marriage and the sexual union is not sinful, the offspring follows the male. And

of a priestly family, one had a recognized right to claim the priestly status. At the same time, priests had always been appointed, anointed, inducted, or, in some cases, elected, before assuming the ritual duties priestly office required.[67] Thus, the apparent tension between priestly offices being bequeathed based on lineage and priestly offices being filled through some sort of appointment process is not substantial. Rather, it reflects the standard practices of patrilinealism, where genealogies are composed solely of male members who are also exclusively responsible for the construction and maintenance of the patriline.[68] Indeed, becoming a priest and assuming priestly duties is remarkably similar to becoming a son and assuming the rights of inheritance. In a patrilineal system, genealogy is important, but birth does not control genealogy. In addition to rules established by male authorities for determining patrilineal legitimacy, a ritual of ordination is necessary. Whether the ordination is overseen by a political authority or by a cultic one, an existing member of the patriline must ritually recognize a new individual.

Thus, the apparent antinomy in Hebrews between Jesus as a priest of the order of Melchizedek, who is 'without genealogy' and 'a priest forever' (7.3), and Jesus the priest who represents an idealized form of an Israelite cultic priest who holds his position because of his lineage (7.16) does not create such tension when viewed within the social context within which priests were initiated and functioned. The author understands Ps. 110.4, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek', as indicating that God 'appointed' Jesus high priest (Heb. 5.9). The use of Ps. 110.4 to establish Jesus' priesthood is usually read as contrasting with levitical priests who were priests based merely on lineage. Just as a patriarch ceremonially 'adopts' his heir, so a priest must be properly designated or initiated by someone with the authority to do so.[69] Usually that authority resides in someone who already possesses the status to which the initiate attains, an existing member of the lineage, the father or his equivalent.

The contrast between Melchizedek and the levitical priests, however, is not based on a devaluing of the rights of lineage per se. The argument in ch. 7 is not that Jesus has no lineage, but that he is of a superior lineage; Jesus is directly

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what [fem.] is this? This is the daughter of a priest, Levite, or Israelite who was married to a priest, Levite or Israelite' (text continues with elaborations on the principle first stated); translation from Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, p. 273. It should also be noted that the matrilineal principle is often misconstrued as indicative of a matrilineal kinship structure that emerged in Judaism. Nothing could be farther from the truth. As Cohen says, 'With only a few exceptions rabbinic law is patrilineal. Status, kinship and succession are determined through the father' (p. 264). The destruction of the Second Temple and the degradation of priestly authority did not put an end to patrilinealism. For a discussion of the rabbinic preservation of the priesthood despite the lack of a temple, see W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 256–70.

67 Jonathan's status as high priest is also reconfirmed several times by various sovereigns whenever power shifts. See 1 Macc. 11.27, 57. Simon, Jonathan's successor, is similarly recognized as high priest by foreign powers; see 1 Macc. 12.17, 18, 20.

68 Cohen calls attention to the similarities between Roman and rabbinic law for determining whether the child is a legitimate member of the patriline; see *Beginnings of Jewishness*, pp. 293–98, 256–70.

69 Perhaps, as Koester suggests, the author may wish to make clear that Jesus is not a usurper who 'bought' his way into the office, like so many recent priests, both Jewish and Roman; see *Hebrews*, p. 297.

descended from God. That is why the argument for Jesus' priestly status in ch. 7 culminates not with the designation 'priest' or 'high priest', but with a return to the title 'Son'. Nor is the argument for the superiority of Jesus' priesthood based solely on his divine parentage or his 'ordination' by God; more significant is his once-for-all self-sacrifice. The first time the title 'high priest' appears (2.17), the author immediately describes the role's purpose: 'to make (sacrificial) expiation for the sins of the people'.[70] Commenting on 2.17, interpreters often note that Hebrews adumbrates the argument that Jesus is not merely a priest, but priest-*cum*-sacrifice. While Heb. 2.17 does provide an overture to a later discussion of Christ's role as high priest, interpreters often fail to note that the epexegetical comment 'to make (sacrificial) expiation for the sins of the people' does not exclusively describe a peculiarly christological function, but a function typically associated with priests. It safe to say that, for the author of Hebrews as for most people of Greco-Roman antiquity, a priest is, by definition, someone who offers sacrifices, most importantly, blood sacrifices.[71]

Sacrifice:

It would be difficult to overstate the significance of sacrificial blood for Hebrews. Sacrificial blood is never merely symbolic; the author recognizes it as the essential substance needed for purification. Heb. 9.22 makes the following *a priori* claim: 'Indeed, nearly everything is purified by blood according to the law, and, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins'. The author also explains that blood is required for the inauguration of the covenant – not just the 'old covenant', but any covenant (9.18–22).[72] Although a superficial reading can lead to the impression that Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice implies that Hebrews devalued blood sacrifice altogether, such a reading grossly underestimates the author's belief in the efficacy of blood to effect purification, a belief commonplace among Greeks and Romans as well as Jews. Addressing Jesus' sacrificial role in establishing the new covenant, Heb. 9.12–14 supports Jesus' superiority by arguing that if the blood of goats and calves had the power to purify, surely 'the blood of Christ' possesses a power of purification that surpasses the blood of animals.

No other NT document is as focused as Hebrews on the sacrificial blood of

70 The Greek reads εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ. Though this is the only time this verb appears in Hebrews, it is not an uncommon word and most commonly means to expiate or propitiate a god through a sacrificial offering. The NRSV translates the same phrase 'to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people'. See BDAG (3rd edn), pp. 473–74. It is related to the noun ἱλαστήριον which in Exod. 25.16ff. refers to the covering of the ark upon which blood is sprinkled on the Day of Atonement. Not surprisingly, ἱλαστήριον appears in Heb. 9.5 in the description of the levitical process of atonement.

71 In the Roman Imperial context, a person other than the priest would in many cases perform the actual slaughter of the animal, but the role of such a person was seen as simply an assistant to the priest, who bore responsibility for the ritual duty.

72 Many commentators have pointed out Hebrews' dependence on Exod. 24.8 in Heb. 9.18. Many also note that the author of Hebrews seems to have confused or conflated different rituals in 9.18–22. Attridge calls it 'a sort of conflation of Pentateuchal rituals' in which the author 'may have assimilated the inauguration of the covenant to the installation of the Aaronid priests'; *Hebrews*, p. 258. Attridge's suggestion is exactly right, as I hope to show in the discussion that follows.

Jesus.[73] Six times it explicitly mentions the redemptive effect of Jesus' blood and twice calls Jesus' death a sacrifice (θυσία). But, even when the words 'sacrifice' (θυσία) or 'blood' (αἷμα) do not appear, Hebrews speaks of Christ 'offering' (προσφέρω) himself.[74] Athough these expressions reflect typical ways of speaking of sacrificial offerings, there is no doubt that the sustained discussion of this christological element in chs. 8–10 depends on the concepts, language and symbols of the Israelite priestly cult. To be sure, Christ's self-offering constitutes a perfected form of sacrifice. But the standard by which Christ's sacrifice is judged perfect is set by the cultic regulations found mainly in Exodus and Leviticus.

To say Christ died 'for our sins' or 'for our sake' seems to have been a traditional formula among early believers in Jesus, including Paul. Although this tradition may well be the starting point for Hebrews' claim that Christ offered himself up as a sacrifice of expiation and purification, Hebrews exhibits a significant development from the simple 'Christ died for our sins'. A brief comparison with Paul illustrates the gap. Most frequently Paul refers to Jesus' death simply as, well, Jesus' death.[75] Certainly Paul viewed Jesus' death as a sacrificial act of vicarious atonement and considered the death central to his christology.[76] But, with very few exceptions, Paul does not speak of Jesus' death in traditional sacrificial language.[77] Paul does not even often refer specifically to Jesus' death when he speaks of Christ's accomplishments and the benefits for believers. He never speaks of Jesus' death specifically as a source of purification, though it is not unusual for him to use the language of purity and impurity.[78] Various passages demonstrate that Paul believes his followers have been

73 According to my computer count, the blood of Christ (or 'Lamb') is specifically referred to five times in Revelation: 1.5; 5.9; 7.14; 12.11; 19.13. However, Christ's blood is primarily used to provide graphic imagery – a trait typical of Revelation – in describing Christ's role within the cosmos, rather than to demonstrate how or why the blood effects purification, although 1.5 may be an exception.

74 The word αἷμα is quite common in Hebrews, but I count at least six times it refers to Christ's blood: 9.12; 9.14; 10.29; 12.24; 13.12; 13.20. The two places Jesus is called a θυσία in Hebrews are 9.26 and 10.12. However, this word occurs a total of seventeen times in Hebrews, far more than any other NT document. Next is the Gospel of Matthew, where it appears eight times. Most often in Hebrews it occurs in the plural when the author is speaking of the sacrifices associated with the levitical cult. The verb προσφέρω (as well as some related verbs) is very frequent in Hebrews, too frequent to provide an accurate count easily. However, examples of the use of this verb to refer to Christ's sacrifice can be found in 5.3, 7.27 and 10.10.

75 See, e.g., Rom. 5.6, 8.

76 See 1 Cor. 15.3.

77 The only unequivocal exception to this assertion can be found in Rom. 3.25: 'whom God offered as an expiation through the faith in his blood'. I translate it literally here, though I recognize it is an awkward construction. The textual apparatus in the 27th edition of Nestle–Aland, *Greek New Testament*) leads me to believe the text is likely to be corrupt. It may be worth noting, however, that it is God who offers up Jesus, not Jesus who offers up himself, as in Hebrews.

78 For example, Rom. 6.19: 'For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness for the sake of lawlessness, so now you present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification' (translation mine). In 1 Cor. 6.9–11, Paul asks, 'Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?' Paul then goes on to specify various kinds of wrongdoers: idolators, thieves, drunkards, etc. In v. 11 he ends his harangue: 'And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, and you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.' Both of these examples are typical of Paul.

cleansed of their sin on account of the death of Jesus. But Paul describes this transformation as justification, sanctification or glorification, never purification.

The contrast with Paul makes it easier to see the extent of Hebrews' dependence on the levitical sacrificial system in formulating christology. As Koester has correctly observed, while Hebrews can speak of prayers and good works as a kind of 'sacrifice' (θυσία), these works do not bring about atonement or purification so that one can stand within the presence of God.[79] To quote Heb. 9.22 again: 'without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins'. Following this observation, however, Koester argues that Christ's sacrifice is not only superior to other sacrifices, but that no other sacrifice – 'including Levitical sacrifices' – accomplishes the task of atonement.[80] Christ's sacrifice is not merely superior, it is in a category unto itself; it constitutes *the* ultimate sacrifice. But, without the sacrificial logic of Leviticus in particular and the patrilineal logic of sacrifice generally, the christology in Hebrews would have no credibility. In other words, while I agree with Koester that Christ's sacrifice is categorically different from other sacrifices, Christ's sacrifice follows the same conceptual patterns associated with sacrificial rituals that sustain patrilineal structures.

The overarching function of the levitical cult was to facilitate a relationship between God and the people of Israel and to define thereby the boundaries that defined Israel.[81] Similarly, the overarching function of Christ's sacrifice in Hebrews is to establish a relationship between God and worshipers of that God, and to define thereby the parameters for membership in this newly established lineage. What makes Hebrews' christological sacrifice categorically different from levitical sacrifice is that through Christ God establishes a new patriline superseding the one established through Aaron. Foundational to my theoretical framework here is that sacrifice enables the stripping away of the limits of biology and mortality so that one can enjoy membership in a privileged lineage that itself forms an eternal social order. This same logic of sacrifice is at work in Hebrews, just as it was in the levitical cult.

One way to clarify the patrilineal logic of sacrifice is to invoke two classic categories used in the study of sacrifice: expiation and communion. Performance of expiatory sacrifice provides relief from sin or impurity. Communion sacrifice provides for restoration, social integration and unification (or reunification). While scholars sometimes draw these distinctions in studying sacrifice in general, Jay persuasively argues that the categories of expiation and communion break down in the practical manifestations of sacrifice. In other words, sacrificial practices usually involve elements of both categories. While a sacrifice may remove impurities or sins,

79 Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 414. In contrast to Hebrews, for many early Christian writers as well as the rabbis, prayer and good works were indeed the functional equivalent of atoning sacrifice.

80 Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 414.

81 The concluding verses of the ordination ceremony for the priests (Exod. 29.43–46) explain that the service of the priests enables God to dwell among the people and provide instruction to them (for the priests' job is to maintain the sanctity of the Tabernacle, which enables communion with God). The parallel version of the ordination ceremony in Lev. 8 begins by God instructing Moses to gather 'the whole congregation at the entrance of the tent of meeting', which seems to indicate the participation of all the people in the ceremony. Once the ceremony concludes and the priests perform their first post-ordination sacrifices, 'Moses and Aaron entered the tent of meeting, and then came out and blessed the people; and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people' (Lev. 9.23).

the same sacrifice also functions to integrate the newly purified back into the community. Jay views the processes of expiation and communion as complementary elements that comprise the 'logic' of sacrifice, which is really about the construction and maintenance of relationships. The process of forming one coherent identity (whether for an individual or a group) requires a concomitant process of differentiation. 'There is necessarily an "either/or" about lineage membership (members must be distinguished from non-members), and for patriliny, this either/or requires transcending descent from women'.[82] It is no surprise, then, that Greek, Roman and Israelite/Jewish rituals in which the pollution of childbirth is expiated are identical with or closely linked to the rituals that join the child to the father's lineage.

Many of the regulations for sacrifice spelled out in Exodus and Leviticus confirm Jay's point. The description of the ritual that consecrates Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, an elaborate ceremony involving the sacrifice of no fewer than eight bulls and nine rams, explicitly names both 'expiation' and 'consecration' as the ceremony's purpose.[83] God declares that the purpose of this rite is to enable his relationship with the people (Exod. 29.44–46): God can only dwell among the people when they are in a state of holiness. Holiness requires priests, because the purity of priests maintains their readiness for contact with the divine. Holiness also requires blood, because it is the 'ritual detergent' that purifies objects, spaces and people.[84]

Certainly the ritual that inaugurates the Aaronite priesthood both expiates and consecrates. What may be noticed less often is that the purpose of the ritual is the establishment of an eternal lineage.[85] Indeed God reiterates that the priesthood will continue in perpetuity at various points during various rituals. In Exod. 40.14–15, for example, God says, 'You shall bring [Aaron's] sons also and put tunics on them, and anoint them, as you anointed your father, that they may serve me as priests: and their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout all generations to come'.[86] Such ritual is not for the priests' benefit alone. Their lineage facilitates an enduring covenant between God and the people by maintaining the boundaries of holiness (and thus the social boundaries that determine the community of

82 Jay, *Generations*, p. 40.

83 God's instructions for this ritual appear twice, in Exod. 29 and Lev. 8. Sometimes scholars unwittingly operate with the two categories of expiation and communion (or consecration), which they often assume are mutually exclusive. The 'confusion' of purification and consecration in the levitical version of the consecration of the Aaronite priests greatly disturbs Jacob Milgrom: '[T]he notion that the same application of the blood of the purification offering can simultaneously decontaminate and consecrate is intrinsically wrong. The realms of impurity and holiness are incompatible with each other and their admixture is lethal' (*Leviticus 1–16*, pp. 522–24). He takes pains to explain that blood used for the purpose of purification (כפר, which he translates 'purgation') is always distinct from blood used for sanctification (קדש), even as he recognizes the regulations are not always consistent (pp. 533–34).

84 Whether a sacrifice is said to enact consecration or atonement, blood is the substance required to realize the condition for which the ritual is designed. The Bible itself gives an explicit rationale for the purifying power of blood in Lev. 17. Blood is splattered on the people when the Mosaic covenant is inaugurated (Exod. 24.8), smeared on certain body parts of Aaron and his sons during their ordination (Lev. 8.23; Exod. 29.20) and blood is splattered or sprinkled on the altar or designated parts of the altar in virtually every ritual of purification performed by the priests.

85 See Exod. 28.40–43; 29.9; Lev. 7.34–36.

86 See also Exod. 27.21; 30.21, 30–31.

Israel).[87] Ritual sacrifices enable participants to be part of a 'ritually defined social order, enduring continuously through time, that birth and death (continually changing the membership of the "eternal" lineage) and all other threats of social chaos may be overcome'.[88]

I submit that the establishment of a ritually defined alternative social order is the overarching purpose of Christ's sacrifice in Hebrews. This assertion is in no way meant to deny the expiating function of Christ's death. But, as I have mentioned, the author does explicitly link the sacrificial death of Jesus with the consecration/inauguration of the new covenant. Indeed, Heb. 10.29 specifically calls Jesus' blood 'the blood of the covenant', and 13.20 speaks of 'the blood of the eternal covenant'. Like the ordination of Aaron and his sons, that Christ's sacrifice both inaugurates the new covenant and atones for sin demonstrates that the sacrifice serves both communion and expiating functions. Christ's sacrifice is communal because the purifying capacity of his blood enables access into the heavenly sanctuary for others. In 10.19, as the author winds down his lengthy description of the purification and sanctification accomplished by Christ's death, he addresses his audience as 'brothers' and speaks directly of entrance into the divine realm now available to 'those who hold fast to the confession'. Just as Jesus once humbled himself to commune in human form with his 'brothers' (2.10–18), his followers can now join his exalted, divine, eternal lineage and the promised inheritance that goes with it. Heb. 12.22–23 reads: 'But you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, with a myriad of angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven ...' What could be a better example of a 'ritually defined social order, enduring continuously through time'? Jay's description of the relationship between sacrifice and patriliny is particularly apt for Hebrews:

> The twofold movement of sacrifice, integration and differentiation, communion and expiation, is beautifully suited for identifying and maintaining patrilineal descent. Sacrifice can expiate, get rid of, the consequences of having been born of woman (along with countless other dangers) and at the same time integrate the pure and eternal patrilineage. Sacrificially constituted descent, incorporating women's mortal children into an 'eternal' (enduring through generations) kin group, in which membership is recognized by participation in sacrificial ritual, not merely by birth, enables a patrilineal group to transcend mortality in the same process in which it transcends birth. In this sense, sacrifice is doubly a remedy for having been born of woman.[89]

The christology of Hebrews demonstrates the way patrilineally defined kinship structures, along with the ritual and discursive practices that support them, provided the raw material that not only helped define Jesus, it defined who Jesus' followers were by establishing a new, superior, divinely sanctioned lineage with new terms for membership.

87 See e.g. Exod. 31.12–17.
88 Jay, *Generations*, p. 31.
89 Jay, *Generations*, p. 40.

The Epistle to the Hebrews Is Priscilla's Letter

Ruth Hoppin

Priscilla's Letter Encounters a Modern Mystery

In the shadow of an ancient mystery – the loss of the author's name – *Priscilla's Letter* has met a modern parallel. My 1997 book, *Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, encountered a series of misadventures suggestive of deliberate suppression. Only a few months into an obligatory two-year contract, the publisher first severed communication with me, then declined to provide me with additional books according to contract terms, and finally refused to fill orders from libraries and individuals. A woman who wanted to present my book to area groups was rebuffed when she called the publisher for information. *Priscilla's Letter* was omitted from a list of 1997 and 1998 books included with the publisher's printed catalog – a mystifying oversight. Needless to say, the promotional leaflet I had been promised, utilizing good reviews and professional endorsements, never materialized.

Sales activity through book distributors, and the listing of the book on the publisher's website in January 1998 obscured what had really happened. A year later a would-be customer informed me the book had been taken out of print; International Scholars Publications confirmed the out-of-print status to a caller from Amazon books — but said nothing to me. As for my option to purchase the photographic plates, I prefer not to speculate on what became of them.

Despite the secret machinations of the original publisher, my book did not fade into oblivion. Symbolically situated on the rugged coast of northern California – a sentinel of freedom – Lost Coast Press reprinted *Priscilla's Letter* in 2000. As if to underscore the futility of hindering the free exchange of information and ideas, it was the centennial year of Priscilla's debut as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Further emphasis occurred with resolution of a hard-fought legal battle spawned by these events. In May 2003, through the perseverance of attorneys in California and Maryland, I received a $70,000 judicial settlement from the original publisher of the suppressed book.

In Priscilla, we have a candidate for the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews who meets every qualification, matches every clue, and looms ubiquitous in every line of investigation. To evaluate the evidence without encumbrance, we need first to clear away some intellectual debris.

A Masculine Participle? Not Necessarily

The case for Priscilla can no longer be summarily dismissed by citing a so-called 'masculine participle' in Heb. 11.32 as generations of commentators have done without analysis or rebuttal. In the phrase, 'time will fail me in telling', the participle διηγούμενον (telling) modifies the pronoun με, the accusative case of ἐγώ (I). Thus

the participle is in the accusative case, in which the masculine and neuter forms are the same, having *omicron* in next to the last position, where the feminine has *eta*.

Is the participle masculine or is it neuter? Or was it originally feminine, and changed to masculine or neuter by alteration of a single letter? To make a determination, we must consider both *form* and *intention*. The first possibility is that the author was masculine and the participle was intended as such. A second possibility is that the author was feminine, and the *editorial masculine* was intended; that is, the author meant to speak not only for herself but for others, who might wish to recount the deeds of heroes of faith. A third possibility has been generally overlooked: *the participle is neuter in both form and intention*. When the individuality of the author is not crucial in a sentence, the use of the neuter has ample precedent. In Heb. 11.32, the author is indeed a person in the abstract, for time would fail *anyone* in telling.

Let's pursue this line of reasoning. As we know, a participle functions as an adjective. According to Blass and Debrunner: 'When the predicate stands for the subject conceived as a class and in the abstract, not as an individual instance or example, then classical usage puts the adjectival predicate in the neuter singular, even with subjects of another gender'.[1] In the New Testament, examples of non-agreement in gender between subject and adjectival predicate are found in Mt. 6.34, ἀρκετὸν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἡ κακία αὐτῆς ('Today's trouble is enough for today'), and 2 Cor. 2.6, ἱκανὸν τῷ τοιούτῳ ἡ ἐπιτιμία αὕτη ('This punishment ... is enough for such a person'). An example from non-canonical literature is Hermas, *Vis.* 3.9.3, τὸ ἀρκετὸν τῆς τροφῆς ('enough food'). It is more likely than not that διηγούμενον is used as a kind of abstraction in Heb. 11.32, and the possibility, at least, must be taken seriously.

The final possibility is that *eta*, in a feminine participle, was changed to *omicron* in any of several scenarios. Perhaps a copyist thought the *eta* was a mistake, or a copyist or others viewed the *eta* balefully and changed it to suppress female authorship. Would someone really change a letter to suppress female identity? Ask Nympha or Junia. Or perhaps the *eta* was changed by friends of the author to protect the letter at a time when female teachers were in disfavor. If we do not wish to posit the alteration of a single letter, we still have a participle that is *either* masculine or neuter, the neuter being a cogent alternative in both *form* and *intention*.

God Alone Knows? Perhaps Not

Next, let's remove another deterrent to consideration of Priscilla's claim to authorship of Hebrews: the intellectual default to Origen's remark that only God knows who wrote Hebrews. The loss of the author's name was not a normal occurrence but a history alert with flashing lights. Origen, writing in the third century, may have been correct, but we need to ask why this was so. Perhaps the question suggests the answer.

Adolf Von Harnack, who first argued for Priscilla's authorship, refers to 'the astonishing fact that the author's name was lost'. He suggests that we look for someone 'near Paul, and a trusted companion of Timothy, whose name or position explains this strange intentional or unintentional suppression'.[2] Friedrich Schiele,

1 Friedrich Blass and Alfred Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 72–73, 76–77.

2 Lee Anna Starr, *The Bible Status of Woman* (Zarephath, NJ: Pillar of Fire, 1926, reprinted 1955), p. 399.

defending Harnack's hypothesis, declared the anonymity of Hebrews unique in New Testament and kindred literature.[3] He explains that many literary works of Christian antiquity, lacking their real author's name, at least bear a pseudonym. Either a name was assumed at the outset or a more desirable one substituted. In those rare cases where the true name was lost, a new one was soon provided and retained. Unlike apocalyptic literature, letters have intense personal interest. The letter-writer's name was of prime importance and easiest to preserve, but should it be lost a consistent pseudonym would be provided. Not unreasonably, we might even expect that an effort would be made to discover the real author. But in Rome, where Hebrews was well known and quoted by Clement, no one had a clue. Refusing to accept Origen's reiterated comment, Schiele protests: 'The anonymity of the Epistle to the Hebrews appears so peculiar and abnormal that it urgently demands an explanation ... Why has just this epistle lost its author's name without the substitution of a better one? ... Harnack's Priscilla hypothesis furnishes a complete and satisfying solution.'[4]

Nor should we hastily attribute the Epistle to the Hebrews to a hypothetical unknown leader of the early church – an entity perhaps unnamed in Scripture, as implied by Origen. One so close to Paul, on such familiar terms with Timothy as to bring him along, if possible, without delaying one's own trip (Heb. 13.23), one so prominent a teacher can scarcely have eluded mention. According to Harnack, we may say *a priori* that the author is named either in the Pauline letters or in Acts.[5] Even if we posit an unknown entity, that person must meet the same criteria for authorship as persons known to us by name. The conversion story in Heb. 2.1–3 must check out for the author and for many of the author's flock – who must be disciples of apostles. The mystery author must have had a ministry at the destination city and connections at Rome, where Hebrews was circulated and highly esteemed – as did Priscilla. A mismatch at any point disqualifies the candidate.

Not a Letter? Read This

The postscript to Hebrews, contained in the final four verses of the thirteenth chapter, is a treasure trove of evidence. Here is mention of Timothy, a colleague, linking the author to Paul. Here is reference to Italy, establishing a geographical marker. The search for Priscilla, a Roman woman, close to Paul, will be facilitated by securing the final chapter of Hebrews to the first twelve. As for the missing prescript, where the name of the author usually occurs, there are two possible reasons for its omission. By suppressing the name of the author in the prescript, the letter could be assigned to Paul – as it was eventually – much to the liking of certain elements in the church. Alternatively, it might have been omitted by the author in favor of an alliterative beginning. Eyeing the loosely constructed precepts of ch. 13 and comparing them with the formal tone of chs. 1–12, some have challenged its authenticity. Someone other than the author, the argument goes, composed the final chapter and tacked it on to the original document. Thus, Hebrews is a sermon, not a letter.

3 Friedrich Michael Schiele, 'Harnack's "Probabilia" Concerning the Address and Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *The American Journal of Theology* (1905), pp. 290–308.

4 Schiele, 'Harnack's "Probabilia"', pp. 292–93.

5 Starr, *Bible Status of Woman*, p. 407.

Hebrews reads well aloud because the writer was trained in rhetoric. It can be recited in about an hour. One might call it a sermonic letter, but the integrity of Hebrews, from beginning to end, can be affirmed by comparison of structure, style and content. For example, Heb. 12.28, a summons to acceptable worship through hope of an unshakeable kingdom, is a connecting link. On one side is Heb. 12.14–29, where the hope of an unshakeable kingdom is developed; on the other is Heb. 13.1–21, where the thankful acceptance of a lasting city results in service pleasing to God. 'Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship ...' (Heb. 12.28). 'For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come ... let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise ... sacrifices ... pleasing to God' (Heb. 13.1–16). In a Greek verbal identity, 12.28 has: 'let us serve God acceptably', (εὐρέστως); the mirror image in 13.16 is 'God is pleased' (εὐρεστεῖται). Even the postscript (13.22–25) is linked by a literary device to the preceding section. Note the correspondence between δὲ παρακαλῶ ('and I urge') in v. 19 and παρακαλῶ δέ ('and I urge') in v. 22.

Lane develops an argument for unity based on style. He notes the following literary devices that recur in the thirteenth chapter: chiastic structure, paronomasia (play on words), unusual word order to sustain attention, elegant style, linguistic rhythm, assonance, alliteration and the use of classical idioms, giving examples for each. An example of linguistic rhythm is found in 13.3: 'Remember those who are in prison, as though you yourselves were being tortured'. Lane labels these stylistic identities 'a distinct literary signature' that identifies the writer 'as conclusively as would an unsmudged set of fingerprints'. This is the signature written across the first twelve chapters. With examples culled from every part of the disputed chapter, the unity of the document is conclusive.[6]

Finally, there is no manuscript evidence against the unity of Hebrews. R.V.G. Tasker argues that no evidence exists for the circulation of Hebrews without the closing chapter. He states that 'Clement of Rome as early as 96 [CE] uses the language of ch. 13, and ... the *prima facie* assumption is that he knew the Epistle as we now have it ... In the central portion of Heb. 13 the writer returns to some of the main thoughts of the letter.'[7] With the thirteenth chapter intact, we have a writer who is close to Timothy, hoping to travel with him (v. 23), and by inference close to Paul. We are fortunate to have this human link in the chain of evidence, even as we explore other connections among Paul, Priscilla and the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Paul Becomes the Interim Author

While the identity of the true writer has long been submerged, Paul eventually gained wide acceptance as the author. In the late second century, Clement of Alexandria attributed the letter to Paul, reasoning creatively that Paul wrote in Hebrew and that Luke translated into Greek; Origen attributed the concepts to Paul and the actual

6 William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols.; WBC, 47 A, B; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), I, pp. lxvii–lxviii; II, pp. 496–97.

7 R.V.G. Tasker, 'The Integrity of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *ExpTim* 47 (1935–36), pp. 136–38.

writing to an associate. Origen knew about another suggested 'helper' of Paul – Clement of Rome – but did not speculate. The Eastern church accepted Paul as the author by the third century. Acceptance came later in the Western church. The first step was to arrange the letter with Paul's letters. In the third-century document Chester Beatty Papyrus II, Hebrews appears after Romans, and in the fourth-century manuscripts Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, it appears before the Pastorals. Paul became the author by implication, and Hebrews was endowed with apostolic origin.

How could Hebrews be given to Paul when no one really believed he wrote it? One reason is that the letter was highly regarded and apostolic origin would ensure its canonicity. Another reason is the reference in Heb. 13.23 to Timothy, who was close to Paul. A third is the affinity of Hebrews with Paul's writings, despite their obvious differences in style and theology. To cite a few examples in 1 Corinthians alone, compare doctrine: 'yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist' (1 Cor. 8.6) and 'but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds' (Heb. 1.2). Compare imagery: 'Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it' (1 Cor. 9.24) to 'let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us' (Heb. 12.1). Compare the use of Old Testament Scripture, especially Psalm 8: 'For God has put all things in subjection under his feet' (1 Cor. 15.27) to 'You have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet' (Heb. 2.7b–8a).

The same appropriation of the metaphor of running a race appears in Gal. 2.2 ('to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain'). In fact, Ben Witherington's study on 'The Influence of Galatians on Hebrews' reveals intriguing parallels.[8] These include relatively minor points, such as the use of a rare word, πηλίκος ('how great'), found in the New Testament only at Heb. 7.4 and Gal. 6.11, in place of the usual word, πηλίκος, to convey the same meaning. Witherington then considers a more doctrinal matter, the use of the word διαθήκης ('testament/will or covenant/treaty') to mean 'testament' in Heb. 9.15–17 and Gal. 3.15–17, and nowhere else in the New Testament: 'once a person's will has been ratified . . .' (Gal. 3.15) and 'Where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death . . .' (Heb. 9.16–17).

Witherington discerns other similarities. Both Galatians and Hebrews 'use the technique of culling historical examples from the Old Testament to enforce their paraenesis'[9] (Gal. 4.21–31 and Heb. 3.12–19). In the concluding chapter of Hebrews, we find the same pattern that is evident in Pauline letters, especially Galatians: injunction, benediction, greetings and messages, and final benediction. Witherington suggests that parallels between Galatians and Hebrews may have accounted for the placement of Hebrews just before or after Galatians in early canon lists and versions of the New Testament. He cites the Sahidic version of the Festal Letter of Athanasius, the Sahidic NT, and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Witherington questions whether the author of Hebrews may, to some extent, have

8 Ben Witherington III, 'The Influence of Galatians on Hebrews', *NTS* 37 (1991), pp. 146–52.

9 Witherington, 'The Influence of Galatians', p. 150.

been interpreting Paul for a different audience. Admitting that Hebrews has a much broader purpose than 'mediating Paul',[10] he claims that the two documents are more closely related than generally thought. Witherington concludes that Paul's theology might well have proceeded along the line of the author of Hebrews, more than it proceeded along the line of Luther's exposition. That is, Hebrews may illuminate an aspect of Paul's theology – not just the thinking of a segment of the church. Germane to our discussion, Witherington deems the author can be found somewhere in Paul's circle.

Thus, the necessity of seeking the author in Paul's circle is supported not only by the fortuitous reference to Timothy. The connection is intrinsically rooted in affinities with Pauline thought.

When Silence Speaks Louder than Words

The virtual certainty of finding the author's name in Scripture is anchored in an early date for the epistle, based on internal evidence. References to testimony by those who heard Jesus – testimony accompanied by 'signs and wonders and miracles' and charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 2.3, 4) – serve well to identify the sender and the recipients as second-generation believers. If the author were recounting history before the recipients' time, we should expect mention of Paul alongside the preaching of 'eye-witness' reporters. Paul, who labored and preached in Ephesus, was the leading evangelist in the early church. Although 'arguments from silence' are sometimes regarded with suspicion, they need to be decided case by case. The simple, common-sense interpretation of Heb. 2.3, 4 is that the recipients were second-generation believers.

The author of Hebrews is intent to convince Jewish Christians that the former covenant, filled with hope for the future, has come to fruition in the new. Ineffectual repetitive sacrifices of the priests have given way to the perfect, once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Temple worship has culminated in worship mediated by the Savior. Though referring to the tabernacle in place of the Temple, the real topic is the efficacy of the sacrificial system. Donald Guthrie states: 'The distinction between tabernacle and Temple may not have been as sharp to the original readers as appears to the modern reader'.[11]

Why would the astute author fail to mention the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the demise of the old sacrificial system, had it already occurred? Here, again, an argument from silence can be convincing if not compelling. Consider, for example, how regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary are equated with the 'old covenant' (Heb. 9.1). Now look at the verse immediately preceding: 'In speaking of "a new covenant", he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete will soon disappear' (Heb. 8.13). At this point in the argument, how could the dissolution of Temple worship pass unremarked? As Leon Morris and Donald Burdick propose: 'The author's failure to mention this surely means that it had not yet occurred'.[12] In Hebrews, the present tense is used to describe the sacrificial

10 Witherington, 'The Influence of Galatians', p. 151.

11 Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (TNTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press and Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983, reprinted 1999), p. 28.

12 Leon Morris and Donald W. Burdick, *Hebrews & James* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), p. 8.

system (9.6–9; 7.8; 13.10). According to Morris and Burdick, Heb. 7.8 is properly translated: 'And here, mortal ("dying") men receive tithes, but there, one of whom it is testified that he lives'.[13] They go on to explain: 'The present tenses of both dying and receiving coupled with the "here" at the beginning may be held to indicate that the temple system was still in operation at the time the words were written. Thus they support a date before A.D. 70 for the writing of the epistle.'[14]

To the counterclaim that Clement of Rome uses the present tense in describing the Temple (*1 Clement* 61), Guthrie replies that 'clearly in his case [it is] a literary device and not a historical usage'.[15] Harold Attridge notes that Josephus alternates between present and past tenses in describing tabernacle and priestly vestments and uses the present tense in referring to sacrifice (*Ant.* 4.6.1–8 §102–50, 4.7.1.1–7§151–87, 4.9.1–7§224–57).[16] I believe this shows a certain liberty in using tenses, and that Josephus's use of the present tense, like that of Clement, can be seen as a narrative device. In conclusion, the use of the present tense in Hebrews should not be discounted, but the failure to mention the fall of the Temple remains determinative.

We are now looking for a colleague of Paul, whose name might have been lost 'accidentally, on purpose'. In order to bring Priscilla into sharper focus as the possible author of Hebrews, we shall ask two distinct but related questions. First, does the author identify with women to such an extent that we suspect the person *is* a woman? Second, does the author evince traits that have traditionally been ascribed to women? By this I do not mean that all women are 'nurturing', for example, whereas men lack the 'nurturing gene'. Rather, we seek those traits that are generally considered feminine, mindful of the influence of social expectations. Ross S. Kraemer refers to 'identifiable differences in the writings of women and men . . .' due to 'different social realities' in all times and culture.[17]

Especially, I do not imply that the development of thought can be attributed to one sex or the other, as if the reasoning process differs. Rather, we are to seek clues in the personality, mode of expression, and status of the writer. There is a clear, insistent feminine voice in Hebrews – a voice that presents women as exemplars of faith along with men, to a surprising degree.

Let Us Now Praise Famous Women

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews we enter a world populated by women. We greet Sarah (11.11) and Rahab (11.31) by name. We are sure to recognize the widow of Zarephath whose son was restored to life by Elijah (1 Kgs 17.8-24) and the Shunammite woman whose son was resurrected by Elisha (2 Kgs 4.18–37) in the 'women who received their dead by resurrection' (11.35). Had their names been recorded in Scripture, they would likely appear. The writer recounts the faith of these

13 Morris and Burdick, *Hebrews & James*, p. 65.

14 Morris and Burdick, *Hebrews & James*, p. 65.

15 Guthrie, *Letter to the Hebrews*, p. 64.

16 Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), p. 8 n. 58.

17 Ross S. Kraemer, 'Women's Authorship of Jewish and Christian Literature in the Greco-Roman Period', in Amy-Jill Levine (ed.), *'Women Like This': New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), p. 221–42 (242).

two women – faith that enabled these miraculous events to take place. One expects the story to be told differently, making Elijah and Elisha – not two anonymous women – the Godly doers of miraculous deeds. Same stories, different narrator: 'How glorious you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! ... You raised a corpse from death and from Hades, by the word of the Most High ...' (Sir. 48.4–5); 'Elisha ... performed ... marvels with every utterance of his mouth.... Nothing was too hard for him, and when he was dead his body prophesied' (Sir. 48.12–13). This differs from Hebrews' account of women, through faith, receiving their dead by resurrection. Don't look for women at all in Sirach's roll call of heroes of faith. He begins: 'Let us now praise famous men' (Sir. 44.1), and he means just that. In fact, women are never mentioned in similar Jewish lists.[18] Obviously, we are dealing with an innovative selection of names.

We discern individual women, and groups of women who are not immediately identifiable behind veiled references. According to Gilbert Bilezikian, the naming of three men in reverse chronological order in Heb. 11.32 is an oblique reference to three women with whom they are linked in salvation history: 'Barak owed his victory to Deborah (Judges 4–5), Jephthah to his daughter's sacrifice (Judges 11), and Samuel owed his ministry to the dedication of his mother Hannah (1 Samuel 1) ... Indeed, by resorting to the subtle device of name inversions, the author of Hebrews seems to convey the message that God used the discreet ministries of women singularly chosen by Him to bring about history-shaping deliverances by the hand of Gideon, Samson, and David ...' He goes on to say that the very subtlety with which the theme is developed 'suggests the restrained hand of a woman'.[19]

In the NRSV and NIV, Sarah's situation is downgraded as Abraham is made the subject of Heb. 11.11. The diminishing of Sarah's role is accomplished, in part, by the translating of the phrase, 'received power to conceive', or, equally defensible, 'was enabled to found a posterity' (δύναμιν εἰς καταβολὴν σπέρματος), as 'received power of procreation'; thereby, Abraham is made the subject of the verse. Next, the phrase, 'past the normal time of age' (παρὰ καιρὸν ἡλικίας), or, idiomatically, 'past the age of fertility' was rendered 'too old'. Never mind that several manuscripts have 'for childbearing' (εἰς τὸ τέκνοσαι)[20] and others have the phrase 'she gave birth'.[21] With the translation 'too old', the phrase might apply to Abraham.[22] This cleared the way for creative changes in word order: 'By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father ...' (NIV). Only a footnote saves Sarah from role-model oblivion: 'Other ancient authorities read *By faith Sarah herself, though barren, received power*

18 Pamela M. Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context* (SBLDS, 156; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), p. 140.

19 Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 303–304, quoted in Ruth Hoppin, *Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Fort Bragg, CA: Lost Coast Press, 2000; Bethesda, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1997), p. 47.

20 Harold Attridge lists D* P 81 2495 pc b vg^{ms} (sy^{h}) (*Hebrews*, p. 321 n. 6); and Alexander Souter (ed.), *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910, reprinted 1956) lists D* P 31, al. pauc. Sura (hl.) Euthal.$^{cod.}$.

21 a^{2} D^{2} 𝔐 b sy n (Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 321 n. 7).

22 Hoppin, *Priscilla's Letter*, p. 40.

to conceive, even when she was too old, because she considered him faithful who had promised' (NRSV); 'Or *By faith Sarah, who was past age, was enabled to bear children because she'* (NIV).

The NIV provides yet an additional stratagem for marginalizing Sarah's role – the insertion of Abraham's name into the text. This version reads: 'By faith Abraham ...' and thereby it supplants 'by faith Sarah herself...' (Πίστει καὶ αὐτὴ Σάρρα). With *Sarah* the subject of v. 11, we have a smooth flow of thought. In vv. 9 and 10, two instances of Abraham acting 'by faith' precede 'by faith, Sarah herself received power ...' (Πίστει καὶ αὐτὴ Σάρρα ... δύναμιν εἰς καταβολὴν σπέρματος ἔλαβεν ...). The pronoun 'herself' (αὐτή) is intensive and serves to emphasize that Sarah, as well as Abraham, was an agent of faith. Finally, a summary sentence, v. 12, begins 'therefore' (διὸ), revealing that through the faith of both Abraham and Sarah, God's promise of multitudinous Abrahamic descendants was fulfilled. It is here that we find a reference to Abraham's age, counterbalancing the allusion in v. 11 to Sarah being past the span of reproductive years: 'Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, ... as many as the stars of heaven ...' (διὸ καὶ ἀφ' ἑνὸς ἐγεννήθησαν, ... καθὼς τὰ ἄστρα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῷ πλήθει ...).

A recent commentator states that standing against any attempt to read Sarah as the subject of Heb. 11.11 is 'the fact that the Sarah of Genesis is not a believer but an amused skeptic'.[23] This is the rationale for preferring '*he* considered him faithful who had promised' to '*she* considered him faithful who had promised', in v. 11. However, before we dismiss Sarah as a model of faith on such grounds, consider how *Abraham* responded to the divine promise: 'Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed' (Gen. 17.17).

Moreover, by what reasoning can Rahab, identified as a prostitute (πόρνη) by the author (Heb. 11.31), but not Sarah, be a model of faith? Yet the author confers this high honor upon Rahab. The author was familiar with the roll call of heroes of faith in Ecclesiasticus in the Septuagint, following right along with mention of Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses. However, while Sirach names Abraham he does not name Sarah; he extols Joshua but does not name Rahab. By contrast, the author of Hebrews alludes to Joshua without naming him, then names Rahab instead. There is a reference to Rahab in Jas 2.25 where she is described as 'justified by works' in saving Joshua's spies, but Hebrews accords her a higher honor, naming her with those who *by faith* took their place in salvation history.

The presence of women in the catalog of exemplars of faith is noteworthy – and there are three more. J. Rendel Harris identifies Judith, in the Apocrypha, as the person who 'won strength out of weakness (ἐδυναμώθησαν ἀπὸ ἀσθενείας), became mighty in war (ἐγενήθησαν ἰσχυροὶ ἐν πολέμῳ), (and) put foreign armies to flight (παρεμβολὰς ἔκλιναν ἀλλοτρίων) (Heb. 11.34)'.[24] He demonstrates that Clement of Rome, reflecting upon Hebrews, automatically identifies Judith with the valiant ones of Heb. 11.34 (*1 Clem.* 55.3). Clement, tracking Hebrews, writes: 'Judith went forth to the camp of the aliens' (*1 Clem.* 55.4–5), while Hebrews has:

23 Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 325.

24 James Rendel Harris, 'Sidelights on the Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews', in *idem*, *Sidelights on New Testament Research*, Lecture V (London: The Kingsgate Press, James Clarke & Co., 1908), pp. 169–71.

'turned back camps of aliens', or, in another translation, 'put foreign armies to flight'.

Clement names another woman – Esther – as a model of faith, in these words: 'To no less peril did Esther also, who was perfect in faith ... deliver the twelve tribes of Israel, when they were on the point to perish.'[25] Harris believes that Clement's allusion to Esther, following Judith, with such terminology as 'perfection in faith', reminiscent of Hebrews ('... perfecter of our faith', 12.2; '... make ... perfect through suffering', 2.10), suggests that Esther is to be found in the roll of heroes. Perhaps 'escaped the edge of the sword' (ἔφυγον στόματα μαχαίρης) might cover the case (Heb. 11.34). In Est. 4.11 we are told that there was no escape for anyone who approached the king unbidden by the 'golden sceptre' (χρυσῆν ῥάβδον). Yet Esther did escape: 'he ... said to her ... thou shalt not die ... Having raised the golden scepter he laid it upon her neck and embraced her' (Est. 5.1–2).

One more woman paragon of faith may be discerned: the mother of seven sons prominent in 2 Maccabees (2 Macc. 7.1–41). Valiant in the face of death, she exhorted her sons to hold fast to their faith to the very end. Refusing to renounce their faith, the sons were tortured and killed and, 'last of all after the sons the mother died' (2 Macc. 7.41). We find in Hebrews an unmistakable reference to Maccabees. Compare such language as 'they went about in skins of sheep and goats' (περιῆλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν, Heb. 11.37), 'they wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground' (ἐπὶ ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσιν καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὀπαῖς τῆς γῆς, Heb. 11.38) with 'they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals' (ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς σπηλαίοις θηρίων τρόπον ἦσαν νεμόμενοι, 2 Macc. 10.6). The mother of seven sons reappears in 4 Maccabees (8.2–18.23), where the story is told even more graphically. Thus we can posit an allusion to both books.

Hebrews 11 is a tapestry of salvation history, interwoven with example upon example of feminine luminaries of faith. Through the eyes of the writer we see women in the world, as agents of salvation, worthy of emulation. The women of ch. 11, named and unnamed, are so numerous as to elicit scrutiny. Would a man, writing in the first century or any time since and perhaps inclined to name one or two women of faith, bother with allusions to women and veiled references? The author of Hebrews is either a woman, or a man – closely associated with Paul – who strongly identifies with women.

A Feminine Voice in Hebrews

Moreover, we see the world from the perspective of someone with concerns and characteristics traditionally described as feminine. Again, we need not delve into the biological or social causes of such tendencies in order to pursue a line of investigation. The writer reflects upon the moral education of children, noting that infants are 'unskilled in the word of righteousness' (Heb. 5.13). Education is seen as a continuum with childhood, with adults having learned through experience 'to distinguish good from evil' (Heb. 5.14).

25 J.B. Lightfoot (trans. and ed.), completed by J.R. Harmer, 'The Epistle of S. Clement to the Corinthians', in *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1970), pp. 33–37 (36).

With great tenderness, the emotional commitment of parenthood is portrayed. One instance is the concealment of infant Moses in defiance of the king's decree. Consider the dual reasons for their decision. First, the parents were touched by their son's beauty and grace, and could not obliterate his life. Perceiving his comeliness as a token of God's favor, they did what had to be done to save him. Moreover, they were not afraid of the edict, parental love overcoming the fear of death (Heb. 11.23). This is the description of Moses' act of faith, when he cast his lot with the Israelite people: 'He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter' (Heb. 11.24). Most men would think of Moses' rejection of the Egyptian court in terms of assertion of ethnic identity, not the severed relationship with his foster mother. The author of Hebrews did think of it, felt its poignancy, and gave us a heartrending sentence.

There is another moving observation on parent–child relationships. Human parents discipline 'for a short time, as seems best to them' (Heb. 12.10). 'For a short time' is literally 'for a few days' (πρὸς ὀλίγας ἡμέρας). All too soon, the opportunity for parental influence will be gone, ending when childhood ends. They discipline 'as *seems* best to them' (κατὰ τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς); their judgment can be wrong, and they make mistakes. Instead of rules: 'Children, obey your parents' and 'Fathers, do not provoke your children', as in Col. 3.20–21 and Eph. 6.1, 4, the author presents the nuances of a dynamic, changing relationship with unmistakable wistfulness in Heb. 12.10.

With motherly concern, the author wants all individuals in the church to be secure in their faith, upheld by continual encouragement (Heb. 3.12, 13). Their happiness and that of their leaders is paramount. Gentleness and tact are revealed in the remarkable admonition to allow those who keep watch over their souls to do so 'with joy and not with sighing – for that would be harmful to *you*' (Heb. 13.17, italics mine). Nor are sympathy and concern restricted to any class of people. The compassionate ethos of showing hospitality to the stranger is invoked. The prisoner must be remembered with genuine caring. As for those in pain, their suffering must be shared (Heb. 13.2, 3).

With characteristic empathy, and more than any other New Testament writer, the author delineates the suffering of Christ in vivid language. We are told that Jesus prayed and beseeched God 'with loud cries and tears' (Heb. 5.7). We are told that he had to endure the shame of the cross and the hostility of sinners (Heb. 12.2, 3) – a reference to the emotional side of his ordeal. Indeed, nowhere else in Scripture is compassion *for* Christ so arrestingly portrayed. A direct connection is made between the suffering and weakness of Christ and his redemptive activity. Thus we are told that 'because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested' (Heb. 2.18), and that 'he is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself was subject to weakness' (Heb. 5.2). Empathy, spawned of personal endurance, is presented as the essential key to Christ's standing as an agent of God in effecting spiritual transformation. This quality of compassionate priestly sympathy, named a necessity by the author (Heb. 5.2), though desirable, was not a requirement of the Old Testament priesthood.[26] Arthur Samuel Peake notes a 'tender sympathy' for the priests who offer sacrifices day after day, again and again

26 Kenneth S. Wuest, *Hebrews in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1947), p. 65.

(Heb. 7.27; 10.11), year after year continually (Heb. 9.25; 10.1), officiating at a ritual that was only a shadow of reality, and even for the ritual itself, now superseded (Heb. 8.5).[27]

In Hebrews we glimpse a writer who is profoundly nurturing, one who is authoritative in matters of faith but eager to share and care. We confront a first-rate mind whose literary composition is obviously the product of learning, spirituality and meticulous literary craftsmanship. And yet – this person is not entirely sure of acceptance, hinting at some unstated impediment to ministry. Requesting prayer, the author feels impelled to give a reason for being worthy of the readers' prayers: 'For we are sure that we have a clear conscience' (Heb. 13.18) is the stated reason. The *stated* reason, a puzzle to us, might point to an *unstated* reason why the author is unsure of complete acceptance. Exhorting readers to obey their leaders and to imitate their faith (Heb. 3.7, 17, 24), the author – though a leader – does not presume to address other leaders. Might such reticence be the result of having experienced ambivalence toward women leaders and teachers in the church?

Finally, we come to a mystery within a mystery. What are we to make of Heb. 13.22: 'I appeal to you brethren, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly'? Why does the author end the treatise with an apology followed by an excuse? And why is the treatise described as brief? Hebrews is not brief. Longer than eleven of thirteen epistles attributed to Paul, it exceeds in length any of the letters of Cicero or Seneca. Perhaps we should consider if a different translation is possible – one that brings into focus the author's individuality.

It is instructive to set Heb. 13.22 alongside 1 Pet. 5.12: 'I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God; stand fast in it' (RSV). They are virtually the same in English translation, but compare the Greek: Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἀνέχεσθε τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, καὶ γὰρ διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα ὑμῖν (Heb. 13.22) and δι' ὀλίγων ἔγραψα παρακαλῶν καὶ ἐπιμαρτυρῶν ταύτην εἶναι ἀληθῆ χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Pet. 5.12). In Heb. 13.22 the word for 'write' is ἐπιστέλλω which can be translated 'command or instruct' as in Acts 15.20 where James decides to instruct the Gentiles by letter to abstain from meats offered to idols, from blood, and from fornication. In Acts 15.28 these instructions are called 'necessary' (ἐπάναγκες); thus they are orders. In 1 Pet. 5.12, the corresponding word for 'write' is γράφω, which does not have the same connotation. Combined with δι' ὀλίγων, it means 'a few lines, briefly'. In Heb. 13.22 the word translated 'briefly' is βραχύς, which can be translated 'little', indicating either degree (amount) or time. For example, in Jn 6.7, we read 'that each may take a little' (ἵνα ἕκαστος βραχύ τι λάβῃ). In 1 Pet. 5.12, the corresponding word is ὀλίγον meaning 'few in number'. We find this word also in 1 Pet. 3.20: εἰς ἣν ὀλίγοι, meaning 'in which a few'. Hugh Schonfield picks up these distinctions in meaning in his translation of Heb. 13.22: 'I beg you, brothers, bear with this message of exhortation, for indeed *only to a slight extent have I given you orders*' (italics mine).[28]

27 Arthur Samuel Peake, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NCB; New York: Henry Frowde and Oxford University Press; Edinburgh: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1902).

28 Hugh J. Schonfield (ed. and trans.), *The Authentic New Testament* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1958), p. 364.

Schonfield was not the only scholar to prefer this translation. L. Paul Trudinger notes that while the epistle is not brief, the words of instruction and command are brief. Thus, the author could logically plead for patience with the few words in which the readers were 'enjoined' or 'instructed', the frequent meaning of ἐπιστέλλω in classical Greek. Trudinger cites J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan who support this view. This is Trudinger's translation of Heb. 13.22: 'I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my words of instruction and admonition, *for my commands have been but brief*' (italics mine).[29] Finally, in 1 Pet. 5.12 we find no trace of the plea in Hebrews for the reader to endure the message of exhortation. Instead we have a confident affirmation – 'this is the true grace of God; stand fast in it'. The disclaimer 'I have given you orders only to a slight extent' is unexpected from a teacher and spiritual leader writing not to a superior, nor to a church outside the author's sphere, but to those who were led and taught by the writer.

Note another characteristic of the prayer request in Heb. 13.18, 19. Alternating plural and singular pronouns, the verses read Προσεύχεσθε περὶ ἡμῶν, πειθόμεθα γὰρ ὅτι καλὴν συνείδησιν ἔχομεν ... περισσοτέρως δὲ παρακαλῶ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, ἵνα τάχιον ἀποκατασταθῶ ὑμῖν ('Pray for us ... we are sure that we have a clear conscience ... I beseech you all the more to do this that I may be restored to you the sooner'). Harnack highlighted this feature of the epistle – an almost unconscious sliding from plural to singular – to indicate a close evangelistic partnership. Looking for such a pair, close to Paul, he concluded that Priscilla and Aquila match the description.

Looking again at Heb. 13.18, 19 we encounter an almost quaint manner of expression: 'Pray for us ... I beseech you all the more to do this that I may be restored to you the sooner' – in other words, 'the more you pray the sooner I will return'. One commentator notes '... it is not natural that Aquila should write: "Pray for us ... I exhort you the more to do this that I may be returned to you the sooner". It is natural and affectionate in Priscilla.'[30] Judging from the traditional feminine characteristics and concerns of the author, the pronounced recognition of women as role models of faith, and the otherwise inexplicable loss of the author's name, we are amassing evidence for a woman, in general, as author of Hebrews. Now let's establish the case for Priscilla in particular.

Finding Priscilla in Scripture

Our starting point in the search for Priscilla is the testimony of Luke and Paul to her role in the early church. Luke names Priscilla three times (Acts 18.2, 18, 26) using the diminutive 'Priscilla' (Πρίσκιλλα). Paul names her three times, in Rom. 16.3, 1 Cor. 16.19, and 2 Tim. 4.19. Despite his close association with Priscilla and Aquila, he uses the formal name, 'Prisca' (Πρίσκα). Notice the geography of these references. In Acts, Priscilla and Aquila are in Corinth, to which they have come from

29 Paul Trudinger, 'A Note on Heb. 13.22', *JTS* 23 (1972), pp. 128–30, citing J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 245–46.

30 Mildred A.R. Tuker, 'The Gospel according to Prisca', *Nineteenth Century* 73 (1913), pp. 81–98.

Rome, and in Ephesus. Rom. 16.3, with its greetings to Epaenetus, the first convert in Asia, appears to be part of a cover letter to Ephesus, sent with a copy of the epistle. It is doubtful that Paul would greet so many by name, if they were in a city he hadn't yet visited. 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus, where Paul had arrived with Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18.19). Thus he writes, 'The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you ...' (1 Cor. 16.19). Second Timothy, with mention of Ephesus in 1.18, appears to have been sent to that city. Geography places Priscilla along the Rome/Ephesus axis, where she will prove to be well situated to have written the Epistle to the Hebrews. The epistle, undeniably linked to Rome, as we shall see, was, from evidence to be presented, sent *from* Rome to Ephesus, though Harnack and others believed it was sent *to* Rome.

Now we are ready to read through the scriptural references, starting with Paul's mention of the couple. In Rom. 16.3–5 they head a long list of persons to be greeted. A further clue to their importance is their identification as Paul's associates in evangelism. Whatever the circumstances and nature of their intervention on behalf of Paul, they were in the midst of the fray, and Paul openly acknowledges their providential role. Paul suggests they were known and appreciated even beyond the great population centers of Corinth and Rome where they labored ('to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles', Rom. 16.4). Surely they were held in high regard not only for rescuing Paul, but also for their ministry. One more detail should not be overlooked – they were leaders of a house church in Ephesus ('Greet also the church in their house', Rom. 16.5). Most revealing of the importance of the pair is the next reference, 1 Cor. 16.19, 20. Paul sends greetings, first from all the churches in Asia, and last from the brothers and sisters. Sandwiched between these inclusive general greetings are Aquila and Prisca, and they alone are specifically mentioned. And once more, Paul refers to a church in their house.

In 2 Tim. 4.19 Timothy is asked to convey Paul's greetings to Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Their closeness to Timothy and their importance in the second-generation church are shown in their leading the short list of persons to greet. Priscilla was, in fact, a colleague of Timothy as a corollary of being a colleague of Paul. We surmise, from their coordination of travel plans (Heb. 13.23), that Timothy and the writer of Hebrews were associates, rather than only fellow-believers. However, this relationship is not crystal clear in the English translation, 'our brother Timothy', τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν (Heb. 13.23). According to some commentators, a fellow-Christian would naturally be expressed by τὸν ἀδελφόν (the brother), with the article alone, rather than τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν, with both the article and the pronoun. They assert the phrase in Heb. 13.23 most likely means 'our colleague', referring to the author and one or more persons close to the author, but excluding the readers.[31] For examples, see 2 Cor. 1.1 and Phlm. 1 where τὸν ἀδελφόν means 'brother' Timothy, and 1 Thess. 3.2, where τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν means Timothy as 'co-worker' in the ministry of God.

Whereas Paul bears witness to the importance of Priscilla and Aquila in the church, Luke provides intriguing details of their activity. Paul's letters are earlier, but we meet the couple for the first time in Scripture in the eighteenth chapter of Acts. They

31 Starr, *Bible Status of Women*, p. 402.

are mentioned by name in 18.2, 18, 26. Luke uses the less formal name, Priscilla, and names her first, before Aquila in vv. 18, 26. The names are less closely linked in v. 2, with Aquila's history separating them, and were this not the case the order of names might have been reversed. From this unusual order of names we have a clue that Priscilla was possibly the more prominent of the two, or of higher social standing, or both. When we first meet the couple they are in Corinth, having come from Rome. About two years later, and half-way through the chapter, they are in Ephesus. No sooner do they arrive in Ephesus than Paul leaves them, in no hurry to return (vv. 19–23). In Paul's absence, Apollos arrives on the scene, and Luke relates an episode that will go a long way toward unraveling the mystery of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Priscilla's Protégé

Apollos walks on stage in v. 24; he is hailed as a learned and eloquent native of Alexandria, with his learning and eloquence powerfully focused on Scripture. With confidence born of experience and natural ability, Apollos 'began to speak boldly in the synagogue'. Yet for all his learning, Apollos had one shortcoming: he knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila acted quickly to intercept the problem. They took him aside where they could be undisturbed in order to fill in the gaps in his knowledge. We surmise they took him to their home, for the same word, προσελάβοντο, is used for the hospitality and shelter given to Paul and his shipmates on the island of Melita (Acts 28.2). There they 'explained' (ἐξέθεντο, from ἐκτίθεμαι), in the sense of 'expounding', the deficiencies in his theology, in a detailed course of instruction (Acts 18.26). We don't know how long Apollos accepted their hospitality, but a certain amount of time must have elapsed before he decided to leave for Corinth (Acts 18.27). What had he learned? Surely Apollos must have learned the difference between the baptism of John and Christian baptism. It is provocative to make a connection between Priscilla, a catechist/leader in the church in Ephesus, who taught about different kinds of baptisms, and the catechist/leader of Hebrews who gave instruction in baptisms. The plural 'baptisms' in Heb. 6.2 likely refers to various kinds of lustrations – pagan rites, and Jewish purification rituals – *including the baptism of John.*[32]

Individuals who knew only John's baptism are again the focus of attention in Acts 19.1–7. This time it is Paul who found these persons in Ephesus. He told them about baptism in the Holy Spirit and baptized them in Jesus' name. Thus Apollos, like them, having known only the baptism of John, was not a Christian when he arrived in Ephesus. We learn several salient facts relating the issue of John's baptism to the Epistle to the Hebrews. First, as just noted, the author of Hebrews gave instruction in baptisms, as did Priscilla. Second, Ephesus was an area where John's baptism was not uncommon. We are beginning to look at Ephesus as a possible match with the destination city. Third, Paul was concerned with instructing people in the difference between one kind of baptism and another. Thus Paul, Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos were teachers or learners during their sojourn in Ephesus.

We also surmise that other topics were under discussion. Paul, in Corinth, had proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18.5); Apollos, upon his arrival in

32 Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 164.

Corinth, preached with great persuasiveness, showing from Scripture that Jesus was the Messiah. It remained for the author of Hebrews to develop the theoretical foundation for Jesus' messiahship and to counter possible objections. Paul may have taught Priscilla and Aquila, while learning from them, while they in turn taught Apollos. Plausibly, Apollos, the Alexandrian, may have talked with Priscilla and Aquila about Philo and Alexandrian philosophy, casting some influence upon the Epistle to the Hebrews. We thus perceive a connection between this group of influential leaders and the subject matter and locale of the epistle.

Now a disciple of Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos was necessarily baptized again, as were those disciples of John the Baptist whom Paul encountered in the region of Ephesus. But by whom was Apollos baptized? Luke does not 'construct a baptism by Aquila', and no exegetes have suggested 'he could be suppressing a baptism by Priscilla', according to Professor Antoinette Clark Wire; by her comment she of course implies that his mentors, Priscilla and Aquila, remain the likeliest ones to have baptized Apollos.[33]

Another question is: who encouraged Apollos and gave him a letter of recommendation when he departed Ephesus for Corinth? Harnack argued that Priscilla and Aquila, who had spent 18 months in Corinth and knew the church in that city, were the logical writers of the letter. Apollos was *their* student; why would anyone else give him a letter of recommendation? Some commentators[34] assume that Priscilla and Aquila wrote the letter. For the most part, 'the brethren' (οἱ ἀδελφοί, Acts 18.27), the designated writers remain an elusive entity, and have not been identified with Apollos's hosts.

This may not have been the only instance Priscilla was denied credit for a letter. I am referring, of course, to the assignment of the Epistle to the Hebrews to others. Once the epistle was grouped with Paul's letters and accepted into the New Testament canon, credit for authorship was his, and belief in the Pauline authorship of Hebrews became almost an article of faith. With the development of modern biblical scholarship this position is no longer tenable, and deference to it is no longer a standard of orthodoxy in most circles. Apollos, the student of Priscilla, has emerged as the possible author.

Apollos was first named by Luther in the sixteenth century. Unlike Harnack, who developed a line of reasoning when introducing Priscilla, Luther was merely guessing. However, Luther didn't need a line of reasoning; he had a remarkably appealing candidate. Apollos was a leader of the early church, learned, eloquent, zealous, with apostolic status comparable to that of Paul. There were a few difficulties with Luther's proposal. For one thing, there was absolutely no preceding tradition. Amidst all the conjecture in Alexandria, where authorship was pondered, Alexandria's native son Apollos was ignored.

Although Apollos was not at enmity with Paul, he was the focus of a rival faction in Corinth and well outside Paul's circle of close companions. He is never the direct

33 Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), p. 210 appendix 5.

34 Such as George A. Barton in *The Apostolic Age and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press and London: H. Milford Press, 1936), and Donald Wayne Riddle in 'Early Christian Hospitality: A Factor in the Gospel Transmission', JBL LVII (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1938), p. 151.

recipient or sender of greetings from Paul. Then, just as Paul would never have attributed his conversion to human testimony, as did the true author, so Apollos, the disciple of Priscilla and Aquila, could not attribute his conversion to the testimony of eyewitnesses (Heb. 2.1–4). The connection with Rome – whether one deems Rome the city of origin or the destination – is another disqualifying factor. Apollos was not geographically situated to have been the author. Finally, the loss of the author's name, now inexplicable unless the name is female, would in his case have been unthinkable. Although he was outside Paul's circle, Apollos was recognized and respected as an evangelist (1 Cor. 3.4–6). Unlike Apollos, Priscilla was perfectly situated geographically to have been the author. She had family and church connections in Rome and a continuing ministry in Ephesus, which, we shall see, was the destination city.

The Road to Ephesus

The Epistle to the Hebrews was carried on the tide of history to distant shores, but the first recipients were in Ephesus. Wilbert F. Howard cites Ephesus as the likeliest destination for several reasons. There, Paul and Timothy were well known, and Timothy would have been useful in the struggle to win back wavering Christians.[35] He notes that 'Ephesus was a great center of trade and was in close touch with Alexandria, Corinth, and Rome'. Howard is really reasoning deductively that the gifted writer of Hebrews would have had a long-term ministry in a great center of population. This is our first signpost on the road to Ephesus, then capital of the Roman province of Asia with a population of at least 250,000. Along the same line, the recipients had multiple leaders (Heb. 13.7, 17, 24). The affinity of Hebrews with Paul suggests a destination where Paul had labored for a certain length of time. These factors tend to rule out Philippi, for example, where there was only 'a place of prayer', rather than a synagogue (Acts 16.13, 16), and where Paul's stay was counted in days ('We remained in this city for some days', Acts 16.12).

Embarking on the road to Ephesus, we can take the reference to Timothy in Heb. 13.23 as our point of departure. His freedom, having been restricted by custody or imprisonment, was so recent that coordination of travel plans was uncertain. Apparently Timothy was not in robust health, for Paul had advised him to drink wine to alleviate a chronic stomach complaint and a variety of frequent ailments (1 Tim. 5.23). The possible pseudonymity of the Pastorals, though by no means undisputed, does not preclude the inclusion of authentic sections. One might wonder why someone would pen such a personal remark if there were no basis for it.

Upon release from debilitating confinement, 'impulse and sober judgment' would have led him to return home for rest, comfort and the solace of friends.[36] Where was home, if not Ephesus, long the locale of his ministry? Timothy, as Paul's chief lieutenant, would have ministered in Ephesus during part if not most of Paul's sojourn there. Eusebius states that Timothy was reported to have been the first bishop at Ephesus.[37] The author of Hebrews, pleading with the home congregation 'the

35 Wilburt F. Howard, 'Studia Biblica, XII: The Epistle to the Hebrews', *Interpretation 5* (1951), pp. 80–91.

36 Starr, *Bible Status of Woman*, pp. 194–95.

37 Eusebius, *The Church History: A New Translation with Commentary* (trans. Paul L. Maier; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), p. 94.

more you pray, the sooner I will be returned to you', and suggesting they would meet again in the company of Timothy, was bound for the same place. The epistle, preceding them, would soon be on its way to Ephesus.

There is another clear directional sign pointing to Ephesus as the destination of the letter – the spiritual condition of the recipients. Converts of apostolic preaching, once caught up in the spiritual fervor of supernatural signs and wonders, they have not sustained their ardent spiritual quest (Heb. 3.3, 4). Not progressing in theological sophistication either, they were poorly equipped to defend themselves against false teachings. The pull of former ways of worship – such as the liturgy they once used – established a beachhead for incursion into their faith. Some were beset by doubt while others were neglecting assembly for worship (Heb. 10.25). Judging from the impassioned tenor of the argument, there was peril of outright apostasy. On the positive side, they were to be commended for good works and generosity (Heb. 6.10), for having endured the confiscation of their property with patience and courage (Heb. 10.32–34), and for compassion shown to prisoners (Heb. 10.34).

The message to Ephesus in Revelation is entirely apropos of these characteristics: 'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance... But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first' (Rev. 2.2, 4). The controversy over the date of Revelation is still lively, with such recent authors as Kenneth L. Gentry[38] and Leonard L. Thompson[39] disputing the currently favored date of 96 CE, in the reign of Domitian (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.30.3). We don't know with certainty if this portion of Scripture was composed soon after the time of Nero in 68 or 69 CE or at a later time, or if the church in Ephesus changed much or little in the interval. We do know, however, that here is a spiritual profile of the Ephesian church – not the Corinthian church rambunctious in its enthusiasm, nor the Roman church renowned for its faith and steadfastness even when martyrdom was a reality. To the Roman church, Paul wrote, 'First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world' (Rom. 1.8).

For insight into the spiritual condition of the church at Ephesus during Paul's career, recall the farewell scene at Miletus whence Paul had summoned the Ephesian elders. Paul recounts how he lived among them, not only preaching but even going from house to house to teach (Acts 20.20). He told them he would never see them again, and they prayed and wept and embraced (vv. 36–38). His parting plea is worth noting carefully: 'I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears' (Acts 20.29–31). Now we can understand why the author of Hebrews, writing to Ephesus, remonstrated against believers who were 'dull in understanding' (Heb. 5.12) and still needed to learn the basics when they should have become teachers by then (Heb. 5.12). We can fathom the dire warnings against apostasy (Heb. 6.4–6; 12.25).

38 Kenneth L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation: An Exegetical and Historical Argument for a Pre-AD 70 Composition* (Atlanta: American Vision, 1989, rev. edn 1998).

39 Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Comparison with the milieu of the epistle yields another point of identity with Ephesus. Ephesus was a plausible location for the dialogue with Essene beliefs pervasive in Hebrews. Ephesus was host to an enclave for whom the beliefs of the Qumran sect, brought to light in the Dead Sea Scrolls, were influential. John the Baptist may well have had some connection with the sect, and his disciples in the area may have retained its characteristic beliefs.[40] Representing the Essene branch of Judaism, the literature of Qumran influenced portions of the New Testament, even though Essenes are never mentioned. Paul's letters from and to Ephesus are marked by their influence.

Detailed analysis of the use of Scripture by the Qumran sect, and by the author of Hebrews, is beyond the scope of this article. An example shall suffice. Of 28 references to the 'New Covenant' in the New Testament, 14 are in Hebrews. Both the sect at Qumran and the author of Hebrews cite the covenant theme in Jeremiah (Jer. 31.31-34, quoted in Heb. 8.8–12), and allude to the 'blood of the covenant' (Zech. 9.11). The sect thought of themselves as recipients of a New Covenant and believed that turning back from the Covenant was apostasy and spiritual disaster. The Habakkuk Commentary (1.5) and the Manual of Discipline (Closing Psalm) of the sect speak of 'acting treacherously against the new covenant' and 'turning back' from it. Notice how the author of Hebrews quotes Hab. 2.3, 4 (Heb. 10.37, 38) and admonishes the readers using terminology that would resonate with them: 'we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and keep their souls' (Heb. 10.39).

The attraction of certain beliefs of the sect is obviously a matter of concern to the author, where these beliefs are competitive with or contradictory to Christian faith. Judging from the discussion of angelology in the epistle, the author was mindful of the extraordinary importance of angels in Qumran belief, even in a religious milieu where angels had varying degrees of prominence. The first two chapters of Hebrews establish the superiority of Jesus to angels. Concepts of High Priesthood, sacrifice and atonement, and the nature of the Messiah are all dealt with in dialogue with sectarian beliefs and influence. Where Qumran literature may have parallels or etiology in Old Testament passages, the prominence of these distinctive theological concerns in Hebrews cannot be coincidental. Related issues were intentionally addressed and resolved in Hebrews.

In summary, Hebrews was sent to a major population center that must meet certain criteria, and Ephesus does meet these criteria. No other city where churches were established provides as good a match with no disqualifying evidence.

The Roman Connection

Approaching a new set of signposts, we embark on a road to the city of origin. Too obvious to be missed, 'They of Italy' (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας) in Heb. 13.24 connects Hebrews with Rome. Italy denotes Rome, as it does in Acts 18.2. Only from Rome, a church center, would greetings likely be sent. Although the preposition ἀπό (from or away from) can refer to greetings sent either to or from Italy, it is used similarly in Acts 17.13, where 'those in Thessalonica' (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης) refers in

40 Otto Betz, 'Was John the Baptist an Essene?', *Bible Review* 6.6 (1990), pp. 18–23.

context to Jews of Thessalonica in their own city. The same phrase, 'they of Italy', in Acts 18.2 isn't really comparable. Referring to Priscilla and Aquila expatriate in Corinth, the phrase is 'having come from Italy', not 'they of Italy'.

Citing Oxyrhynchus papyrus fragments and letters, W.D. Gardner states the Greek word ἀπό was practically equivalent to the preposition ἐν (in).[41] Census returns and tax receipts often used the terminology (e.g. *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 157, 158, 171). Great care was taken to find out present residence since immediate notice of removal was required (e.g. *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 251, 252, 253). Gardner asserts: 'Our conclusion is that no inhabitant of the Mediterranean world of the first three centuries of our era, finding the Epistle to the Hebrews, and knowing no reason for taking its phrases in any special sense, would come to any other conclusion, after reading chapter 13.24, than that the Epistle conveyed greetings from certain Christians residents in Italy'.[42]

Another signpost looms in the use of 'rulers' (ἡγουμένοι) for pastors in Heb. 13.7, 17, 24. Only in Rome were pastors characteristically known as 'rulers' or 'leaders'. Attridge notes that 'Particularly in documents connected with Rome it (ἡγουμένοι) is used absolutely as a technical term for such leaders'. He cites *1 Clem.* 1.3; 21.6; Hermas, *Vis.* 2.2.6; 3.9.7.[43] One logically infers that the author resided, or once resided, in Rome.

One more signpost guides us to Hebrews' city of origin. There is a connection between the Roman liturgy and the discussion of Melchizedek in chs. 5 and 7 of Hebrews, where Jesus is referred to as a 'high priest' after the order of Melchizedek (ἀρχιερεὺς κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ, Heb. 5.10). M.A.R. Tuker has this to say: 'The Roman origin of the epistle, indeed, is enshrined in the Roman liturgy. In that liturgy, and in no other, the priesthood of Melchizedek is invoked, and the words used are those of the Epistle to the Hebrews *summus sacerdos Melchisedech.*'[44] Such terminology may have been in the author's liturgical vocabulary, or, conversely, Roman liturgy may have borrowed the author's words. In the former case, we see once again that our author must have lived in Rome at one time. In the latter case, the author was well known and highly regarded in Rome, and, by implication, had once resided in Rome. Just as Priscilla had a ministry in the destination city of Ephesus, she had strong ties to Rome. In every facet of our investigation into the authorship of Hebrews, we see the reflection of Priscilla.

Digging for Truth

Highly visible as church leaders, Priscilla and Aquila were compelled to leave Rome when Claudius, alarmed by turmoil over Christianity, expelled many Jews. In Corinth, their home quickly became 'church headquarters' when Paul moved in with them. In Ephesus, too, they established a house church. They were able to afford spacious living quarters even outside their home city. Osiek and Balch, in a well-

41 W.D. Gardner, 'The Italian Origin of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *The Expositor* 13 (1917), pp. 60–63.

42 Gardner, 'Italian Origin', pp. 60–63.

43 Attridge, *Hebrews,* p. 391.

44 Tuker, 'The Gospel according to Prisca', p. 98.

documented study of households and house churches, dispute the idea that all early Christian assemblies needed to have been small and private. Rather, the size of the group would have depended on available space.[45] Property owned or inhabited by Priscilla and Aquila may have been quite large, presupposing wealth and social standing. Travel was another indication of wealth and status.[46] Priscilla and Aquila were able to go to Corinth from Rome, and from Corinth to Ephesus (Rom. 16.3; 1 Cor. 16.19; Acts 18.18, 19).

Most people are unaware of archaeological discoveries, reinforcing ancient church tradition, which recognize Priscilla as the daughter of a distinguished Roman family. We have already seen that Priscilla, a match for his learning and eloquence, was capable of teaching Apollos. Her identification with an eminent family, while not essential to her qualifications, elucidates her ability to write a polished literary document. She would have studied literature, philosophy and rhetoric. Assessment of Pricilla's social and educational background should encompass all the evidence.

There are several lines of discovery that converge to reconstruct Priscilla's career and her family background. We shall be dealing with early traditions that have been supported or substantiated by literary and/or archaeological evidence. These can be summarized as follows: Priscilla and Aquila may have known Peter in Rome. In Rome, Peter was the guest of Pudens, his convert. Pudens was a member of the Acilian family, some of whom were Christians. The domicile of Priscilla and Aquila was on the estate of the Acilian family. The Acilian family is linked to the Priscilla Catacomb, named for a relative of the New Testament Priscilla.

Varied and numerous sources place Peter in Rome before 65 CE – in 42 or 43 CE – or sometime during the reign of Claudius (41–54 CE). Pseudonymous or not, the reference in 1 Pet. 5.13 to Babylon, 'she [the church] in Babylon', a code word for Rome, reveals that the early church associated Peter with Rome. While Scripture does not highlight Peter's Roman ministry, it is possible that Peter accompanied the pair into temporary exile under Claudius's decree of expulsion. That would account for Peter's sojourn in Corinth (1 Cor. 1.12). According to Eusebius, 'in the ... reign of Claudius, a gracious providence brought to Rome the great and mighty Peter ...'[47]

An earlier witness, Clement of Rome, alluded to Peter and Paul: 'Let us place before our eyes the good Apostles ... St Peter, who ... suffered numerous miseries ... and suffered martyrdom among us' (ἐν ἡμίν, that is, among the Romans – *1 Clement* 5; 95 or 96 CE). Around 110 CE, Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Roman Christians: 'I issue you no commands, like Peter and Paul', meaning that Peter had preached and labored in Rome (*Ad Rom.* 4.3). In the late second century, Clement of Alexandria (*Outlines*) wrote: 'When by the Spirit, Peter had publicly proclaimed the Gospel in Rome ...' In the second half of the second century, Irenaeus, who considered Peter and Paul the 'founders', referred to the apostolic activity of Peter and Paul in Rome in nurturing the church (*Adv. Haer.* 3.3.3).

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 'the tradition

45 Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 33.

46 Osiek and Balch, *Families*, p. 98.

47 Eusebius, *Church History*, p. 72.

connecting St. Peter with Rome is early and unrivalled'.[48] In *Peter in Rome: The Literary, Liturgical, and Archeological Evidence*, Daniel O'Connor concludes that Peter most likely resided in Rome at one time, although the dates are uncertain.[49] De Rossi claims that despite certain 'legendary' elements, there is a historical basis for these traditions.[50]

One tradition indicates that Peter stayed for a while at the Ostrian Villa of the Acilian family, near the Via Salaria. De Rossi believes that Pudens, a Roman senator, and disciple of Peter, belonged to that illustrious family. It is possible, though undocumented, that he is the same Pudens named in 2 Tim. 4.21.[51] In Pudens's home on the Aventine, Peter, a guest, is said to have offered the bread and wine of the communion meal.[52]

In the eighteenth century a series of archaeological finds began having to do with Priscilla. They support the tradition that Peter was shown hospitality by Pudens, and by Priscilla and Aquila. One of these discoveries evinces that Priscilla's house was on Pudens's estate. Since property was kept in the family and passed to descendants and relatives, Priscilla and Pudens were members of the same family. The ancient church of St Prisca, on the Aventine, was built over the house of Priscilla and Aquila, according to venerable tradition – traceable, perhaps, to apostolic times – and affirmed by catacombs scholars De Rossi and Marucchi.[53] Until the fourteenth century, an inscription declaring its apostolic origin adorned the architrave. The narrative of De Rossi and Marucchi reveals remarkable corroborative evidence. In 1776, a subterranean oratory was unearthed near the Church of St Prisca, decorated with fourth-century paintings of the apostles Peter and Paul. It was there that Peter's name, with that of other apostles, was engraved on glass.[54] De Rossi indicated a piece of evidence – another, analogous glass unearthed in his own time on the grounds of a nearby school.[55]

Later, there was digging closer to the church structure, leading to the excavation of an ancient Roman house. Inside the house there was a bronze plaque honoring the owner, Cornelius (of the family of Pudens), senator of Rome in the year 222. This house, the traditional domicile of Priscilla and Aquila, would have been occupied by their relatives' descendants. As a relative, Priscilla, like Pudens, was related to the eminent Acilii Glabriones, a family in which the name Priscilla was recurrent.[56]

We find an intriguing record in a codex containing three sermons on Aquila and Priscilla by Peter the Deacon (1075–1139), historian of the Benedictine Abbey of

48 F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), P. 1068

49 Daniel O'Connor, *Peter in Rome: The Literary, Liturgical, and Archeological Evidence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 50.

50 In H.D.M. Spence-Jones (ed.), *The Early Christians in Rome* (London: Methuen & Co., 1910).

51 Spence-Jones (ed.), *The Early Christians in Rome*, and H.V. Morton, *In the Steps of St. Paul* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1936), p. 470.

52 William Thomas Walsh, *Saint Peter the Apostle* (New York: The Macmilian Co., 1948), p. 280.

53 M.A.R. Tuker and Hope Malleson, *Handbook to Christian and Ecclesiastical Rome, Part I, The Christian Movements of Rome* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1900), p. 495.

54 According to F. Bianchini in *Commentary on Liber Pontificalis* (4 vols.; Rome, 1718–29).

55 F. Cabrol (ed.), *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie (DACL)* (Paris: Letouzsy & Ane, 1907–), pp. 1877–78.

56 Spence-Jones (ed.), *The Christians in Early Rome*, p. 262, and Joseph Holzner, *Paul of Tarsus* (trans. Frederic C. Eckhoff; St Louis, MO and London: Herder & Co., 1944), p. 424.

Monte Cassino.[57] Writing in Latin, he records that 'the apostolic authority consecrated the house of the blessed Aquila and Prisca in honor of the catholic church and gave it the name of the Holy and Undivided (or, indivisible). In the church the apostolic authority ordered a baptistery with a perpetual fountain to be built.'[58] Fr Leonard Boyle, who provided the translation into English, presumes that the 'apostolic authority' refers to Peter and Paul.

Reference to a baptistery in a private home in apostolic times is most striking, and it testifies to a spacious, important place of worship in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. Rediscovery of the Priscilla Cemetery, or Catacomb, in the first half of the nineteenth century, forged yet another link between Priscilla and the Acilii Glabriones, and between Priscilla and Peter. The oldest part of the Catacomb of Priscilla can be traced to the middle of the first century.[59] Crypts from the first and second centuries and the frequent use of Greek in the epitaphs point to a very ancient date. The catacomb is under the estate of Pudens, and was named for his mother, not for Aquila's wife. In 1887, the crypt of the Acilii Glabriones was discovered in the Priscilla Catacomb. Since their crypt is in the oldest part of the cemetery, they must have been the family who originated the burial place. Pudens and the Acilii family therefore had a common burial place, and common property. Again we see that if Priscilla is related to Pudens, she is related to the Acilii Glabriones.

As a member of a distinguished Roman family, a family of consuls, Priscilla's education equipped her for the writing of a literary document such as the Epistle to the Hebrews. By the way, there was no impediment to her marriage to Aquila. In the ancient world Jews often married into leading families.[60] Even if he had been a freedman, Priscilla could have married him if her maternal grandfather had been a consul, though not if her paternal grandfather had been a consul.

Peter's name appears in both Greek and Latin in the most ancient Christian cemeteries, especially in the Catacomb of Priscilla. Edmundson comments that the appearance of this unusual name can most easily be explained by the supposition that either those who bore it or their parents had been baptized by Peter.[61] References to the 'Cemetery of the fountains where Peter baptized' can be traced back to the fifth century. Explorers in the Cemetery of Priscilla found a large reservoir on the first of its two stories, and smaller ones in various corridors.[62] With startling aptness, the Priscilla Catacomb fits the description 'of fountains' better than any other.

The link between Priscilla and Peter is significant for two reasons. First, Priscilla may have been Peter's disciple, and thus her conversion story is an excellent match with Heb. 2.3. Secondly, the Jewish philosopher-theologian Philo, whose writings

57 Vat. Lat. 1193, 46rb; there is a reference to Peter the Deacon as Benedictine Abbey Chronicler in F.L. Cross (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 919.

58 Vat.lat. 1193, 46rb; Cross (ed.), *Dictionary,* p. 919.

59 Ludwig Hertling and Englebert Kirschbaum, *The Roman Catacombs and their Martyrs* (trans. M. Joseph Costello; Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1956), p. 25.

60 W.M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discoveries on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915), p. 357.

61 George Edmudson, *The Church in Rome in the First Century* (Bampton Lectures; London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1913), p. 52.

62 Spence-Jones (ed.), *The Christians in Early Rome,* p. 272.

influenced the Epistle to the Hebrews, is said to have had long conversations with Peter in Rome. Eusebius claims that Philo came to Rome to meet Peter.[63] Priscilla, being close to Peter, may have been privy to these conversations. In any event, she had a chance to read Philo's works in Rome, perhaps to talk with him, and to transform some of his ideas into Christian instruction.

Before we leave the Priscilla Catacomb, we should track down one more clue. The anchor as a Christian symbol appears there at least 60 times.[64] Though common in literature, the anchor metaphor, securing the soul to Divine refuge, occurs in Scripture only in Heb. 6.19. Biblical Hebrew lacks a word for anchor, and where the word appears elsewhere in the New Testament, it is not used symbolically (Acts 27.29, 30, 40).[65] Is it possible that the anchor metaphor was especially meaningful to Priscilla's circle of acquaintances because she authored Heb. 6.19? Did she in fact pen these words: 'We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul . . .'?

If not Priscilla, who has met every necessary and conceivable qualification for authorship, then who shall be named as the author of Hebrews? There is no one named in Scripture, of Paul's circle, universally known and esteemed in the early church, a leader and teacher evangelizing at Ephesus and Rome, converted by first-hand testimony, and strongly identifying with women, who presents a logical alternative. No man named in Scripture meeting *any* of these qualifications provides a reason for the author's name to have been lost through intentional or unintentional suppression. Linked to a noble Roman family, Priscilla's claim is strengthened in terms of applicable education. As we have seen, if we posit an individual *unnamed* in Scripture, that person would still be required to meet the same description, with no disqualifying circumstances. If not Priscilla, then we seek a Priscilla 'clone'. *This is because the Epistle to the Hebrews is Priscilla's Letter.*

63 Eusebius, *Church History*, p. 73.

64 R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul,* I (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), p. 178.

65 Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 183.

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